Rita Sherma
Arvind Sharma
Editors

Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought

Toward a Fusion of Horizons



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For
Professor J.N. Mohanty
In Esteem

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Introduction

Rita D. Sherma

The study of Hinduism and its development coincides with the development of modern hermeneutics. Despite this co-emergence and the rich possibilities inherent in a dialectical encounter between the theories of modern and post-modern hermeneutics, and those of Hindu hermeneutical traditions, such an enterprise has not developed within the boundaries of religious studies. The aim of this volume is to initiate such an interface.

The essays in this volume reflect one or more of the following categories: (1) The challenges and possibilities inherent in the application of Western hermeneutics to the study of Hindu traditions; (2) Critiques of certain heuristics used to "understand" Hindu traditions in the past; (3) The elicitation of new hermeneutical paradigms from the Hindu texts and traditions, in order to develop cross-cultural or dialogical hermeneutics.

From its inception, the study of Hinduism has taken place under the purview of the Western academy. First, Europeans, and later, Americans have translated the texts and defined the traditions of the Hindu world. It was the Western Indological enterprise that classified "Hinduism" and examined it outside its embeddedness in the complex of sacred traditions that have constituted the Indian cultural world. It is well known that much of Hindu self-understanding derives from Western academic pronouncements on the meaning and the nature of the elements constitutive of the network of concepts and practices now known as Hinduism. To be sure, such endeavors performed a great service by laying open the richness and complexity of Hindu thought and tradition for examination and reflection. Yet the inevitable application, to the Indian cultural context, of interpretive methodologies developed and conditioned by Western cultural norms have, arguably, led to some results that bear investigation. Several essays in this volume (particularly Sharma, Tilak, Sugirtharajah, but also Bilimoria) examine the impact of Western hermeneutics on the Indian religious landscape and initiate a corrective discourse on the possibility of alternate interpretive models for understanding Hinduism in particular and the Indian religious world in general.

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While Western hermeneutics have been employed in the study of Hinduism for over a century, Hindu hermeneutics have rarely—if ever—been employed in the service of examining elements of Western history, religion, and culture. Nevertheless, thousands of years of exegesis, interpretation and reinterpretation, of adaptation and reconstitution of ancient norms, concepts, and practices have endowed the Hindu tradition with a wealth of hermeneutical systems and strategies, many of which may have the potential for cross cultural application. At the least, an examination of Hindu hermeneutics carries with it the potential for the stimulation of intersubjectivity, and the initiation of reciprocal hermeneutics. That, indeed, is one of the aims of this volume.

Several essays offer original insights on the potential application of traditional Hindu philosophical principles and doctrinal concepts to cross-cultural hermeneutical frameworks (see Long, Bilimoria, Klostermaier, Adarkar, and Taneja). Others are concerned with the application of a philosophical approach to hermeneutical engagement with Hindu texts in order to elicit more complete interpretations (see Phillips, and Rukmani). This work, in presenting essays that are both critical and constructive, seeks to open up an intellectual space for a creative dialectical engagement that, we hope, will lead to a hermeneutics of reciprocity.

The academic understanding of Hinduism has been greatly influenced by the interpretive mores of the different historical periods in the West during which it has been studied. While hermeneutics as the art and methodology of textual interpretation is ubiquitous in human history, hermeneutics as a modern philosophical category can be traced back to the German Protestant theologian and Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher.

In order to facilitate the dialectical process for the reader, a brief synopsis of the development of modern hermeneutics follows. It is followed by a brief discussion of Hindu epistemological and hermeneutical theories and methods.

Hermeneutics and the Modern Era

The term hermeneutics is related to the name of the Greek god Hermes, the messenger of the gods, and thought to be the founder of language itself. Transmitting messages from the celestial realm to the human world, his role, in a sense, is that of translator and interpreter. Thus, historically, hermeneutics was broadly seen as the art of interpreting texts—principally scriptures. Understanding a text meant deciphering its contents. The hermeneut's work lay in uncovering the original intention of the text. A variety of texts began to be examined by the seventeenth century. The nineteenth century saw the advent of Romanticism and historicism.

The use of the term "hermeneutics" to understand the general ground of understanding itself, was initiated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). He encountered a world of diverse hermeneutic methods fashioned according to the specific needs of the texts of law, religion, literature and so forth. But Schleiermacher argued that understanding itself does not occur in watertight compartments; all forms of

understanding arise from the shared human ability to elicit meaning. Fundamental to understanding is the mastery of the fullness of language and its forms. But beyond this grammatical apprehension is the challenge of grasping the author's intent–a psychological function. The importance of Schleiermacher's work in developing general hermeneutics lies in his insight that hermeneutics is more than the categories of interpretive form; it is the function underlying the art and act of understanding itself, a process that is universal.

Schleiermacher was the first to articulate the problems inherent in trying to interpret the thought of an author from another historical period. The text was no longer a repository of timeless truth that had only to be unveiled. It was a temporally conditioned object. Understanding the author's intent requires, for Schleiermacher, a psychological immersion in the period; the hermeneut must reconstruct the context in which the text was written. The text's meaning is not, therefore, self-revealing but hidden in the circumstances that produced it. There are two perspectives from which to interpret a text: grammatical, dealing with the implications of the language itself, and psychological, which relates to the mind-set of the author. Since we have no access to direct knowledge about the author's thought processes, we are to uncover as much as possible regarding the author's circumstances including aspects of life and culture which may have informed his writing without his explicit awareness. In order to acquire a fuller grasp of the author's intention, there must be a to-and-fro action between the grammatical and psychological spheres and no rigid methodology can be applied uniformly to all texts and all hermeneutical efforts. Neither a text nor a language can be understood without understanding its parts; but parts can never be grasped outside the whole. Therefore, the interpreter is concerned with a *hermeneutical circle*, which implies an ongoing reciprocal exchange between the whole and its parts. The concept of the hermeneutical circle was the outcome of Schleiermacher's analysis of the forms and processes of understanding and interpretation. This circularity of interpretation takes place when the interpreter focuses on a distinct part and places it in the larger context for greater breadth of meaning. Each stage thereby adds to the larger meaning and allows for fuller understanding.

Wilhem Dilthey (1833–1911) furthers Schleiermacher's analysis of hermeneutical methodology but opens it up to a historicality that recognizes the temporal nature of human life and the need to take into account the social and historical context out of which a given text, or work of art arose. Thus, a work expresses a particular human place and time as much as it represents the thought and feeling of a particular author or artist.

Dilthey attempts to develop a science of understanding that can offer a hermeneutical methodology for the "human sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*). In doing this, he maintains that understanding and explanation are distinct from each other. Explanation is descriptive of the outer façade of a thing; its form and function, not its essence and expression. Both explanation and understanding are necessary but the legitimacy of either method depends on the specific context. Explanation is appropriate when examining something as an object of study; understanding is necessary when engaging something or someone as a subject with an inner life.

While Schleiermacher advocates feeling and intuition as appropriate methods for understanding intention and meaning, Dilthey maintains that historicism, the placing of the subject in the appropriate historical context, is essential to proper understanding. Dilthey's argument for the distinction between understanding and explanation as parallel to the distinction between the human and natural sciences, identifies understanding as that which is foundational to the interpretive process at the heart of the human sciences. In apprehending something intellectually, and placing it within a larger frame of reference, there is a reenactment (*nacherlében*) of an expression of lived experience. Dilthey avers that this understanding that is integral to the human sciences is closer to the fullness of the experience of life, than the descriptive, causal explanations of the natural sciences. The natural sciences are based on the experience of externalities; the human sciences relate to inner experience. Thus, the same object may evoke both an outer and inner apprehension, but whereas an outer apprehension centers on its physical properties, an inner apprehension focuses on our internal reactions to it. These reactions, however, are influenced by the social and cultural networks of history in which the individual is enmeshed. Dilthey maintains that human history is comprised not only of the memories of individuals but of societies.

For Dilthey, the hermeneutical circle, the play between parts and wholes, also applies to the interpretations of human experience and activity in history. Dilthey maintains that hermeneutical methods, based on a critical understanding of the individual within the relevant historic context can provide interpretations that are objectively true. He moves hermeneutics beyond Schleiermacher's definition by highlighting the centrality of historical experience. But Dilthey insists on the distinction between explanation and understanding and thereby limits the concept of true hermeneutics to the human sciences, and also confines its scope by treating the hermeneutical enquiry as "deciphering."

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) takes hermeneutics to another level by reinterpreting the concept of understanding altogether. For Heidegger, understanding (*verstehen*) is more than entering into the inner aspects of human experience whether by means of intuition and empathy (Schleiermacher) or by historicality (Dilthey). Understanding, for Heidegger, is essential to our being. Every act of understanding furthers our own self-knowledge. Each glimpse of a new possibility is also an understanding of our own possibilities.

Heidegger conceives of understanding as a capacity rather than merely a cognitive process. It is less a theoretical comprehension than a practical knowledge that relates to our being-in-the-world or existence (*Dasein*). Heidegger's *Being and Time* starts with an analysis of *Dasein*. He rejects Cartesian perspectives of the self as Mind, or simply as pure subject. Being itself has too often been conceptualized in the abstract, or as "a being," or in terms of general characteristics shared by beings. His dissatisfaction with traditional notions of "being" expresses itself in his orientation towards a practical-relational understanding of being-in-the-world. His dynamic categories for understanding human existence include "facticity" which refers to the arbitrary giveness or "throwness" of life and of "being-towards-death" which alludes to the acceptance of one's finitude and the resultant (hoped for) call to genuineness and responsibility.

Heidegger retains the emphasis on historicity and avers that all understanding is, by necessity, interpretive. For him, the ontological significance of language lies in its primacy over understanding; we cannot easily think or articulate beyond the limits of language. Thus being must be understood in terms of temporality, and hermeneutics in terms of ontology.

Heidegger's thought on hermeneutics strongly influenced Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), the name most closely associated with philosophical hermeneutics. As Gadamer argues in his well-known work *Truth and Method*, all theories must begin with a recognition of the hermeneutical circle. Schleiermacher had interpreted the notion of the hermeneutical circle in terms of the relationship of the part to the whole; to understand the whole, it is necessary to grasp the meaning of its parts. But it is equally true that to arrive at an adequate understanding of a part, one must place an interpretation of it within the greater context; that is, in relation to the whole. Heidegger went further still in maintaining that the hermeneutical circle was elemental to all action and understanding; it contains the possibility of a primordial kind of knowing. Such a knowing begins with the "fore-structures" that inform all interpretation. Gadamer refers to these fore-structures as "prejudices." Prejudice, for Gadamer, is inevitable, and not necessarily negative. Gadamer does not integrate the entirety of Heidegger's analysis of human existence into his work on hermeneutics. He does, however, take as his point of departure, Heidegger's perception of human understanding.

Heidegger's analysis of fore-structures as foundational to understanding was explained by Gadamer as that conceptual framework within which all interpretation occurs. Nevertheless, he offers the caveat that there may be hidden biases of which we may be unaware, and emphasizes the need for vigilance against unexamined preconceptions. He challenges the Enlightenment position that advocates "objective" understanding, devoid of prejudice. He maintains that all understanding is based on interpretation but this interpretation does not arise out of individual experience alone; it is heavily conditioned by history and tradition. Every hermeneutical endeavor occurs, therefore, not in a vacuum; it takes place as a historically mediated event.

Gadamer reclaims both "authority" and "tradition." Gadamer does not advocate the embrace of tradition, and the authority grounded in it, without discrimination. But he does dispute the Enlightenment view of the authority of tradition as diametrically opposed to reason and liberty. He is equally critical of the Romantic reclamation of tradition, transmitted whole and unchallenged by doubt or criticism, as an antithesis to rigorous reason. Rather, tradition contains within it an element of choice; even its preservation, according to him, is an act of choice based on reason. Tradition is an ongoing, living dynamic that is in a constant, critical-dialectical relationship with the forces of history. It is neither to be dismissed as diametrically opposed to reason nor as a pre-set given:

> Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated.[1]

A critical engagement with tradition unfolds as the activity of historical consciousness. For understanding to occur at all, a hermeneutical event takes place within the

stream of tradition but also from the perspective of the historical position in which we are embedded.

Gadamer's rehabilitation of tradition is particularly relevant for hermeneutics in the study of religion, for a religious tradition is a living stream that can be apprehended only from within the flow of its own self-reference. That is not to say that it cannot be challenged or critiqued, but it demands that a hermeneutical standpoint takes into account its own situatedness.

Schleiermacher had perceived the work of historical consciousness to be one of reconstruction of the world in which the given text or other object of study had emerged. For Gadamer, this was a limited and ultimately fruitless task, because as historically conditioned beings, we cannot truly return and enter the mind-set of the temporal moment, which gave birth to the object of our study. Gadamer notes "the essential nature of the historical spirit consists not in restoration of the past but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life."[2] The hermeneutical direction that such a perception of historical consciousness entails has, as its point of departure, the concept of the "fusion of horizons" (*horizontverschmelzung*). Edmund Husserl uses "horizon" as a philosophical term to signify the possibility that we have the ability to move our positions and thereby, expand the breadth of our horizons. Gadamer maintains that when we engage a historical object, we move into its horizon, while we bring ours with us. In this movement of one horizon (ours) into another (the one in which the historical object is situated), a fusion of horizons occurs. The understanding that develops in a fusion of horizons is a living interpretation.

A hallmark of Gadamer's thought is the concept of "play" (*spiel*). Although the concept evolves out of his treatment of art, it is relevant to much of his work. In relation to art, Gadamer explains that the concept of play is not about the state of mind of the artist, those enjoying the art, nor even about the freedom of a "subjectivity engaged in play." It refers to the "mode of being of the work of art itself."[3] He maintains that the Enlightenment's stress on reason and individual self-consciousness limits the purview of truth to scientific knowledge, erasing art's claim to truth. Entering a relationship with art provides a way of overcoming alienation in order to live a richer life. Intrinsic to this stance is a critique of the twentieth century aesthetic-commercial approach to art, which Gadamer compares unfavorably to the classical Greek approach. Contemporary Western aesthetic consciousness separates out the artistic experience from other life experiences. He reminds us that in other periods of history, art served religious and cultural functions and mediated truth and meaning relevant to people's lives.

Gadamer also uses the idea of theater (a "play" in English) to illustrate his meaning. In a play, the audience contributes to and completes the meaning of the play. In understanding and participating in the play, we understand ourselves. A proper experience of art elicits truth from the art whether the artistic encounter takes place in the context of performative or visual art. Nowhere is this more clearly the case than in religious traditions. Art exists in a unique temporality that projects the past into the present, not as historical but as contemporaneous. In religious festivals, mythic time or ancient time becomes present time. But for this to occur, the experiencers must

be drawn into the play of the spectacle and be prepared to learn truth about their life-world. Like the audience in a play, we enter into, and complete the meaning of our life-world. The spectator, through his or her interpretation, is integral to the meaning of the play, as we are integral to the realization of meaning in the world that forms the context of our experience.

Gadamer uses the concept of play to illustrate what it means to enter the experience of art. But more importantly, he uses the concept to challenge the belief that a rigid subject/object dualism is the foundational mode of understanding, and that has much resonance in Hindu thought.

The tensions among the various twentieth century theories of hermeneutics prompted the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) to develop his phenomenological hermeneutics directed towards a reconciliation of competing claims to hermeneutical primacy. He sought to demonstrate the ways in which seemingly exclusive areas of philosophy are interdependent. Ricoeur determined that a fuller understanding of human experience necessitated a combination hermeneutic interpretation and phenomenological depiction. Some of Ricouer's most original work concerns his theory of symbolism, which posits that language is central to any interpretive theory. Hermeneutics is required, not for every single linguistic occurrence, but those events where there may be a remainder of meaning. Ricoeur associates this with symbolism, which, he suggests, is any signification in which a surface meaning points to a secondary, concealed meaning that is indirect, secondary, emblematic, and can be fathomed through the first. Particularly relevant for the study of religion is Ricouer's distinction between two types of hermeneutics. The first is the hermeneutics of faith, also referred to as the hermeneutics of recollection, which views the task of hermeneutics as one of reclamation; that is, to recapture or bring to light an inherent meaning or message that was once clear but is now occluded. The second interpretive form is the hermeneutics of suspicion, associated particularly with the work of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. For this model of hermeneutics, the task of interpretation is to identify illusions and expose false beliefs; it is an interpretative form that seeks to uncover the hidden subtext of meaning beneath surface connotations.

The hermeneutics of suspicion has been heavily used by feminist theologians to critique traditional religious doctrine and praxis, by post-colonial scholars to highlight structural injustices, and also by scholars of religion to analyze non-Western religious culture. Nonetheless, there have been some reservations about the unexamined use of the hermeneutics of suspicion to determine the meaning of religion. D. Z. Phillips suggest an expansion of the interpretive study of religion to include "the hermeneutics of contemplation." He contends:

> Since Paul Ricoeur's book, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, it has been commonly understood that if we want to understand religious concepts, we have to choose between two distinct modes of interpreting religion in religious studies; the hermeneutics of recollection and the hermeneutics of suspicion. The hermeneutics of recollection is sympathetic to religion since it assumes that believers are in touch with something real. . .By contrast, the hermeneutics of suspicion denies that there is a divine reality in religion. . .Is religion [merely] a surface phenomenon which can be analyzed in terms more

> real and fundamental than its own? Does religion have anything to say which is irreducibly religion?....In certain cases, reductionist naturalistic explanation will prove to have an application. . . .But as we have seen, these explanations make far more ambitious claims. They claim that all religious beliefs are illusionary.[4]

Phillips maintains that it is necessary to go beyond of the two-fold model of hermeneutics if a religion is to be apprehended in its entirety. He argues for a hermeneutics of contemplation, suggesting that it is "simply an application to religion of the more general character of philosophy itself," and that it reflects on the role that concepts play in human experience. He maintains that while the hermeneutics of contemplation is in opposition to the totalizing claims of the hermeneutics of suspicion, it does not deny that some of the suspicions have validity.

Hermeneutics in Hindu Thought

Hermeneutical approaches in Hindu thought range from an epistemological to the ontological. The situation is further complicated by the blurring of boundaries in Hindu thought between theology and philosophy. The modern Western approach to hermeneutics that was initiated by Schleiermacher emphasizes a hermeneutical stance or philosophy rather than a particular method or technique. This focus on hermeneutics as understanding, in terms of the broadest implication of the word, finds a certain sympathy in Hindu thought.

The *āstika* (orthodox, or "right" view) traditions claimed Vedic literature as their authoritative source and eventually gave rise to many streams of thought and praxis that we now identify as Hindu. From their earliest origins, there is a focus on understanding as an inquiry on the prime purpose of existence and its proper fulfillment. With the emergence of the Upaniṣads, the character of understanding was given more clarity and focus as the experiential apprehension of the nature of being. As J. N. Mohanty writes:

> The Vedas had already decided, famously in the Nasadiya Sukata, that at the beginning of things there must have been being and not non-being (for something cannot come out of nothing); now [with the arrival of the Upaniṣads] this primeval being was said to be the same as the spirit within [all beings]. The highest [understanding] was intuitively realizing this identity of subject and object. How to know it was the issue.[5]

By the end of the Upaniṣadic period, there emerged several philosophical positions that evinced skepticism about the Vedic worldviews. These include not only Buddhism and Jainism, but the *ājñānikas* (agnostics); *ajīvikas* (strict determinists), and *lokāyatas* (materialists). From 300 to 200 BCE, both the strongly Vedic *Dharmaśāstra* literature that set forth ethical laws, and the epic *Mahābhārata*, were written in part as a response to the non-orthodox systems (*nāstika*).

This period also saw the nascence of the *sūtra* (aphorism) literature, a method of transmitting doctrine and philosophy that is uniquely Indian. Singular compilations of the *sūtras* present the framework, or skeleton, of a system of thought, but are too terse to be fully understood without explanation. Explanations by way

of commentaries (*bhāṣya*) proliferated through the centuries. They used the lack of rigidity of the aphoristic style texts to tease out multiple meanings and, thus, each *sūtra* gave rise to several different interpretive schools. Six major systems arose from the *sūtra* frameworks, and came to be collectively known as the six *darsana*-s. Two of the most influential of the *sūtras* of the second century BCE are: the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* of Jaimini, and the *Vedāntasūtra* of Badrāyaṇa (also known as the *Brahmasūtra*). These two aphoristic frameworks gave rise to the divergence in the Mīmāṃsā system between the *Purvamīṃāmsā* and the *Uttaramīmāṃsā*, better known as the *Vedānta*. Other *sūtra* based systems of note are Yoga (*Yogasūtras* of Patañjali); Nyāya (*Nyāyasūtra* of Gotama); *Vaiśeṣika* (*Vaiśeṣikasūtra* of Kaṇāda), and the *Sāṃkyha* (*Sāṃkhyasūtra* of Kapila).

The system of commentarial literature known as the *bhāṣya* thus becomes one of the first genuinely Hindu hermeneutical strategies. The commentarial texts do not merely interpret but also erect new structures of meaning, new modes of understanding. For example, one could argue that without Vātsyāyana (400 CE), *Nyāya* may not have flourished. His commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra* of Gotama goes well beyond explication of *Nyāya* thought to the refutation of challenges to the doctrinal bases. Indeed Vātsyāyana's *Nyāya-bhāṣya* is itself the subject of further commentaries.

Hindu Epistemology

What initially emerged as a way to answer the critiques of heterodox systems such as the materialists and Buddhists against authoritative or sacred words or testimony (*śabda*) as the sole basis of doctrine, eventually became a nuanced and multi-layered epistemological system known as *pramāṇavāda*. The *pramāṇa* theory offers a framework for ascertaining valid means of knowledge. "*Pramāṇa*" refers to both a means of acquiring knowledge (such as "perception") as well as the logical structure for determining how and through what means something is knowable. In establishing this framework, Hindu thinkers debated not only the heterodox skeptics but each other. Inter-*darsana* and intra-*darsana* debates ensued in a long, rigorous, systematic, dialectical process. This produced a strong epistemological theoretical framework.

The *pramāṇa* theory provides the structure for epistemic validation as well as the logical underpinning for justifying such validation. The connection between the object of knowledge (*prameya*) and the knowledge event (*prāmā*) is processed through the *pramāṇa*. The *pramāṇas*-s include inference (*anumāna*); perception (*pratyakṣa*); reliable testimony (*śabda*); analogy (*upamāna*); postulation (*arthapatti*), and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi)*; non-cognition as a means of knowledge refers to the non-presence of an object for the purposes of cognition).

Not all *pramāṇa*-s are accepted by all systems of Hindu thought. For example, *Sāṃkhya* accepts perception, inference, and testimony (*śabda*). But Mīmāṃsā permits the addition of postulation. *Śabda* refers to authoritative testimony from reliable sources–most importantly, but not limited to, revealed scripture.

The *pramāṇa* theory includes not only definitions and sub classifications of the various *pramāṇa*-s but also arguments for the validity of each *pramāṇa* and for its irreducibility to other means of knowledge. Part of *pramāṇa* theory is the categorization of a theory of truth (*pramāṇeya*), which includes theories for the definition of truth, the source of truth, and knowledge of truth. In the centuries long debates on valid apprehension of truth (*pramāṇya*), and invalid cognition (*aprāmāṇya*), questions on practical methodologies for establishing legitimacy came to fore.

Different schools hold different viewpoints but there is a general acceptance of the importance of "practical" methodologies for ascertaining the validity of a particular cognition. That is, it became important to examine a proposition's capacity to give rise to a practical experience of the theory's premise. Whatever the technique, however, Hindu epistemological reflection was never performed in a teleological vacuum. Epistemic analysis had a purpose, and that purpose was ultimate realization leading to liberation (*mokṣa*). This realization could arise from inner (*ādhyātmika*) experiential understanding, or analytical-logical inquiry (*ānvīkṣikī*), but the goal remained *mokṣa*. Interior cognition of ultimate truths required practical hermeneutics, provided by dharma, yoga, and bhakti. Though certainly not mutually exclusive, each can be seen as a hermeneutical theory of praxis that has its own epistemic framework. The significance of dharma as an aim in itself was propounded early in the history of Mīmāṃsā.

Dharma

Dharma itself is classified according to those actions that are incumbent upon all persons (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*); the dharma that pertains to family (*kula-dharma*); conduct based on the fulfillment of obligations in keeping with one's class, gender, and stage of life (*varṇāśrama-dharma*), and *sva-dharma*, the personal dharma of an individual based on the previous three. In the second century scripture, Kṛṣṇa famously invokes the concept of dharma as the logical framework for understanding one's proper course of action.

Hindu ethics validates four aims (*puruṣārthas*) as legitimate for the fulfillment of human life. These are *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokśa*. Dharma has a regulative function vis a vis *artha* and *kāma*, and often, an instrumental role with reference to *mokśa*. While dharma is variously defined (even as "religion" in contemporary usage), it has always had a particular affinity to the idea of "obligation." This is most evident in the Mīmāṃsā tradition which identifies three kinds of action: (a) obligatory (*nitya-karma*); (b) elective (*kāmya-karma*), and (c) forbidden (*pratiṣiddha-karma*). In particular, the Mīmāṃsā school that follows the exegete Prabhākara (ca. 700 CE) links dharma to the performance of obligatory actions and the eschewal of prohibited actions. The *Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā* system also holds that dharma is an end in itself, and not merely the means to an end. The *Mīmāṃsikas* make significant use of linguistic heuristics to argue their point. Dharma, understood in Mīmāṃsā terms, can be said to refer to "right action in the world" and encompasses everything

from ritual actions, and relational conduct, to ethical behavior. But in a way, all actions performed with a sense of transpersonal (or even cosmic) obligation, become forms of ritual action. Mīmāṃsā provided an early hermeneutical framework of the ritual-action segments of the Veda, but considers truly authoritative only the portions containing directives.

Dharma is, of course, a foundational element in Hindu thought despite (or perhaps as a result of) its variegated meanings. It is, first of all, those moral, ritual, ceremonial, and legal obligations that support the social structure. The proper performance of these actions also sustains the moral order, and by extension, the cosmic order. This indeed is one of the bases of the *karma-yoga* doctrine of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to action–but action that is performed without desire for its "fruits". For the performance of detached action (*niṣkāma-karma*) does *not*, Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna, lead to bondage. The working assumption here, of course, is that human activity leads to conduct that will have consequences, which will lead to further action in a cycle that will be hard to transcend–and transcendence is the ultimate aim.

The *Gītā* is the most important attempt to reconcile two streams in Hindu thought that have long been in tension. Hermeneuts throughout the history of Hindu thought have often used either the adage of active involvement (*pravṛtti*) or that of detached quietism (*nivṛtti*), to interpret the philosophy of moral action. The *Gitā*'s foundational teaching is that it is possible to act without incurring the negative consequences of action if one acts in accordance with one's obligations, as long as that action is detached from desire for reward, or fear of detrimental effects. This "detached activity" (*karma-yoga*) is presented in the *Gītā* as harmonious with devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*). Indeed Kṛṣṇa makes it clear that the most efficacious way to renounce the fruits of one's actions is to perform all action as an offering to God (*bhakti-yoga*). Thus *bhakti* presupposes responsible, disinvested action and enables the necessary detachment.

A Critical and Constructive Engagement

We begin our hermeneutical journey with an analysis, by Arvind Sharma, of the ongoing impact on India of the British categorization of Hinduism as a religion and the interpretation of the term "religion." In "The Hermeneutics of the Word 'Religion' and its Implications for the World of Indian Religions," Sharma argues that Western hermeneutics functions under a definition of religion which has been uncritically applied to Hinduism. His critique is focused on the central hermeneutical assumption of the field of the study of religion, that of the definition of "religion" itself, and its damage to the relationships between indigenous Indian traditions. Sharma uses a three-fold approach to the problem. He first considers the implications of the use of the Western conceptualization of religion to define religious thought and practice in non-Western and non-Christian contexts. He then examines the effects of the hermeneutical use of the term "religion" in India's cultural context. He develops several points in service of this analysis, including (a) the argument

that the hermeneutics of the term religion as developed in the West and in Islam, are alien to the Indic context: (b) it is alien due to its insistence on singular or exclusive religious observance, and its assertion of the idea that religion and culture are wholly distinct; (c) that this alien concept of religion was institutionalized in India during the colonial era and met both acceptance and resistance; (d) that the category of religion is largely responsible for the emergence of Hindu nationalism particularly in its form as "Hindutva" which arose as a cultural response to the divisiveness engendered by the systematic institutionalization of the category of religion.

He concludes by offering a corrective hermeneutical lens and practical measures for ameliorating the damage caused by the uncritical application of a very particular and reified understanding of the term religion to the Indian religious world.

Sharada Sugirtharajah explores the influence of the colonial period on Hindu studies through an examination of Max Müller's interpretive stance towards Hindu texts. Few scholars have had such a long term impact on the Western study of Hinduism as the nineteenth century Western Orientalist Friedrich Max Müller. Yet, Sugirtharajah suggests, in "Max Müller and Textual Management: A Postcolonial Perspective," that Müller's hermeneutics are deeply informed by the cultural evolutionary theories, historicism, and typologies of comparative philology that were characteristic of his era. The combination of the heuristic devices available to him and his personal presuppositions about Hindu texts and mores yielded an interpretation that Sugirtharajah describes as "a non-ecclesiastical Protestant form of Hinduism" which, she argues, had an important impact on Hindu self-understanding. Relying on numerous works by Müller, particularly his well known Cambridge lectures, Sugirtharajah finds that Müller created a Hinduism with his own hermeneutical assumptions. She explores the implicit intentions that undergird his hermeneutical enterprise and their effect on Hindu self-definition. Sugirtharajah maintains that her aim is not to question the contributions of Müller but to shed light on the hermeneutical framework that led to Müller's projection of a Hinduism that, she argues, had more to do with "his own nostalgia for an uncontaminated European past" than the authentic experiences of practitioners of the Hindu traditions.

Regarding the interpretation of Sanskrit texts, the philosopher J. N. Mohanty has written:

> [T]he Indologists generally want to *understand* the text without any interest in the question of truth or falsity of the thesis asserted in the text. The philosopher's primary interest is in truth or falsity. He interprets the text in order to determine the thesis it asserts, but in the long run he wants to be able to decide if that thesis is acceptable or not. Without that interest, a philosophical text ceases to be of philosophical interest; it may at most be of *cultural* interest. [For example], as a philosopher, [B. K.] Matilal did not merely expound, translate, and interpret Sanskrit texts, but argued for the position he supported and against the position he opposed. He asked, as every philosopher has to ask, which position is valid, and he made his own reasoned choice. On all these counts, Matilal did with the Sanskrit philosophical texts what, as a philosopher, he was under an obligation to do.[6]

"Reading and Evaluating Sanskrit Philosophical Texts," by Stephen Phillips, likewise argues for a much stronger emphasis on philosophical engagement with Sanskrit texts. Concerning Sanskrit philosophical texts, he mentions two general

hermeneutic patterns in the Western academy: (1) an indological and historical approach and (2) a properly philosophic engagement. The first, he writes, is directed "towards intellectual history, towards an interpretation of the Sanskrit texts within a certain history of ideas." The second is inclined towards the properly philosophic discipline of evaluation. That is, seeking to determine the legitimacy of the reasoning behind, and validity of, an idea, an assumption, or a belief–bringing to fore the philosopher's interest in, as Mohanty has said, in the truth or falsity of a position. This philosophic task of evaluation does not proscribe reflection on exogenous considerations, but the philosopher's primary obligation is to properly apprehend the claims and arguments being made. Ideally, understanding the claims being made and determining the truth or validity of the claims are the two approaches that, Phillips argues, reinforce each other on the philosophic reading. He notes that such a strategy allows for the philosopher to make "common cause with the text in a concern for truth and warranted opinion." Phillips contrasts this with the contemporary Indological approach, presents three principles of philosophic hermeneutics, and demonstrates how to the Indological approach to Sanskrit texts would be enhanced if it were to be informed by the philosophic approach, particularly with reference to the important *darsana* genre, in contradistinction to the normative view of the relationship between the disciplines.

In a similar vein, Purushottama Bilimoria, challenges the central interpretive position of the sub-discipline of the Philosophy of Religion which holds as a working premise the necessity of determining "a solid, irrefutable, and logically profound reading of the Transcendent." In "*Being and Text*: Dialogic fecundation of Western Hermeneutics and Hindu Mīmāṃsā in the Critical Era," Bilimoria observes that such a stance, when directed at non-Western and non-Christian peoples, has helped to undermine indigenous hermeneutic traditions, native wisdom and ways of understanding that have sustained such peoples for many centuries. He maintains that the only answer to such damage is a call to cross-cultural dialogic fecundation. His critique emerges from two areas on the margins of the ongoing discourse in Western scholarship on the art/science of hermeneutics.

First, he initiates his stated project, that of dialogic cross-fertilization, by bringing to light the important Hindu hermeneutical tradition known as Mīmāṃsā. He illustrates the influence of these interpretive methods, originally developed for the reading of complex ritual texts, in clarifying local social and political issues and jurisprudence praxis in India, including the period of the British colonial era. From a basis in Mīmāṃsā, Bilimoria develops a cross-cultural hermeneutical thesis based on certain specific features of the signifier-signified relation, speech acts, and the elimination of personal signification (*apauruṣeyatva*). His second source of constructive criticism is the wealth of dialogic hermeneutics available in the discourses of Indian feminist and postcolonial critique where a new space is being cleared for women, the marginalized, and colonized subjects in diverse cultures.

Klaus Klostermaier argues against an uncritical application of the "hermeneutical circle" in his essay titled "The Hermeneutical Circle and the Hermeneutical Center." Klostermaier reminds us of a point at once obvious and occluded: that every circle has a center and in terms of hermeneutics, that center is its innermost point of

stability from which all notions of reality and truth arise. In this sense, as there are many hermeneutical circles, there are many hermeneutical centers. The "hermeneutical circle" has been widely referenced in the humanities since the time of Heidegger. Gadamer further elaborated on it, affirming what he believed was the inescapable influence of preconditioned assumptions, of tradition-mediated beliefs on the process of understanding that we call the hermeneutic circle. While Gadamer did offer a caveat against biases that mitigate against a genuine understanding, Klostermaier finds the very idea of a hermeneutic circle that doubles back on itself, that reaffirms "tradition" with a touch of contemporary gloss to give it currency, to be thoroughly inadequate for the true understanding–particularly the depth of understanding that is required for Gadamer's fusion of horizons. Klostermaier avers that the Heideggerian-Gadamerian hermeneutic circle, forgetful of its center, of its "archai," is in danger of becoming a hermetically sealed circle, confident in its continuance through reaffirmation.

The circle of reality or understanding that is aware of its own center, relies for its dynamic on the core vision, the stable point, the ultimate truth that exerts a teleological pull towards the "still point" beyond, yet within the endless circle. As Klostermaier notes, the best-known symbol of the circle is the wheel of *saṃsāra*, the ever-repeating round being, dissolution, and re-emergence that characterizes physical reality. All knowledge within this circle is relative, but the eternal center at the heart of this saṃsāric circle is the ultimate truth where being and knowing merge. Along with the Hindu philosophical systems (*darsana*-s), all streams of Hindu art and scholarship aim to reach that center, a point identified with ultimate understanding, with ultimate knowledge.

Klostermaier points out what is perhaps the most important distinction between the hermeneutic circle thus conceived, and our contemporary Western notion of the circle: that is the idea that understanding, in its ultimate form, transcends speech, thought, and concepts. Such understanding is a being/knowing that can properly be approached through the hermeneutics of meditative insight. Klostermaier argues for the introduction of the concept of the center (or, archai) as an important step towards hermeneutic circles as open systems, towards the dialogue that reaches for true understanding beyond the limitations of self-contained circles conditioned by pre-judgments.

Shrinivas Tilak's essay, "Cāturdharmya: Hermeneutics of Integrative Differentiation," takes as its starting point, Arvind Sharma's earlier reconstruction of an interpretive model for understanding the (inter) relationship between the four major Indic religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Sharma's term for this model is "*cāturdharmya*." Signifying the number "four," "*cātur*" has often been used in Indian philosophy and literature to indicate plurality in general. This plurality in Indic religious traditions, Sharma has averred, is indicated by the four major traditions and epitomized by their interactions which have produced a variegated mosaic of thought and praxis. This diversity as well as its interwovenness is expressed by the term *cāturdharmya*.

Tilak argues that Sharma's seminal concept of *cāturdharmya* needs to be extended from its stance as a heuristic device for comparative religion; this essay

further develops it into a hermeneutics of integration as well as differentiation. Tilak notes that Sharma has argued elsewhere that distinctions may be made between Indic religious traditions on the basis of the variation in the *degrees* of acceptance of Vedic authority. For example, Buddhism and Jainism differ from Hinduism in accepting Vedic authority in the sphere of dharma but not *mokṣa*. Tilak avers that the concept of *cāturdharmya* can be extended to reflect the Indic way of life and religiosity, constituted by an organic multiplex of four articulations, each in turn representing an intermingling of several components so that, as an ensemble, it creates what Tilak identifies as the "dharma" within which the four "dharma-s" (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh) have their existence.

Relying on the Vedic models of *ṛta* (the harmonizing cosmic principle that integrates the parts of the cosmos into a synthetic whole) and *bandhutā* (connection, or relationality), he demonstrates the conceptual underpinning for the hermeneutics of *cāturdharmya*. Noting Sharma's argument that, historically, the prevailing complex of ritualized praxis in Indian society was, for the most part, unaltered by distinctions between orthodox and heterodox traditions, Tilak explains that the original perceptions of dharma in the four traditions, despite some differences in nuance, retained the idea of right action–activity or movement that sustains an ordered cosmos and allows for the maintenance of a virtuous and auspicious world. Tilak maintains that the various religious, cultural, and social communities connected by related ritual practices, customs, and perspectives that arose and have endured in India for millennia can be included under the rubric of dharma based upon two conceptual pillars: *samanvaya* (analogous to the idea of syncretism) and *udāhraṇa* (analogous to eclecticism). Tilak goes on to demonstrate the significance of the integrative and differentiating potential of his expanded interpretation of *cāturdharmya* for the followers of the four principal dharmas, their respective communities, and the implications for the relationship between these traditions.

Tilak's main thrust is to establish what he calls the integral "quaternity" of dharma that is always accompanied by the equally intrinsic "individualizing" process. This pluralizing tendency central to dharma allows for diverse modes of discourse and a variety of articulations of dharma. Indeed, Tilak argues, dharma is *defined* by such plurality.

Aditya Adarkar's critical-constructive essay "Psychological Growth and Heroic Steadfastness in the *Mahābhārata*" questions the alleged universality of Freud's and Otto's Rank's hermeneutics of the heroic archetype. Using as his baseline Otto Rank's influential 1909 essay, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero," Adarkar suggests that the model of the hero that emerges from the story of Karṇa in the epic *Mahābhārata* provides an alternative to the Freudian model. Rather than posit individuation and radical disjunction from parents (especially the father) and from one's own personal history as the expected path for self-actualization and psychological growth, the story of Karṇa suggests the possibility–indeed, the desirability–of growth and heroic unfolding through acceptance of, and fidelity to both one's parents (particularly the father) as well as one's life history with its loves and interwoven loyalties. In this alternate paradigm, the hero does not come into his own through radical individualization and violent schism between father and son; he

enters completion and fulfillment through steadfastness in loyalty and duty to father, family, and friends, in face of temptation and danger.

Adarkar also examines the psychological dimensions of the path of *bhakti*, so integral to understanding Hindu epic narratives. Applying the model of Karṇa's psychological growth to the writings of the *bhakti* poets, Adarkar suggests the love and fidelity that Karṇa exhibits towards his parents is comparable to that which the *bhakti* poets direct to God. In both cases, the steadfastness of devotion in the face of extreme circumstances leads to a self-transcendence based on the "the dharma of devotion and love."

T. S. Rukmani takes a hermeneutic approach towards value ethics in Hinduism. In "Value Ethics in the Early Upaniṣads: A Hermeneutic Approach," she writes, significantly, that while ethics do not form a separate branch of Indian philosophy, writers on philosophy depended on the writers of the *Dharmaśāstras* to expound moral principles. This, she observes, is often misunderstood as a lack of interest in ethics as such. While Western moral philosophy has often been preoccupied with determining its origin, Rukmani avers that the Hindu acceptance of *ṛta* as the natural law underlying moral action, allowed for a broader, more flexible, and ongoing development of moral principles in keeping with the proper fulfillment of an individual's role in society in coherence with cultural development of society. The Vedic society, which is the source of Hindu moral principles and practice, thus created a pattern of living that encouraged the attunement of one's life and conduct with the telos of *ṛta*. Rukmani suggests that it is possible to compare that idea of *ṛta* with the transcendent nature of Plato's idea of the Good. As *ṛta* is both a natural and moral law, the proper observance of regulations that insured the welfare of the world was integral to living in conjunction with *ṛta*. Moral theory in Hindu thought is also teleologically directed when it is pursued with an end in mind such as dharma or *mokṣa*. Thus, one follows moral principles because they are facilitative of a higher good and not because of fear of punitive consequences at the hands of an omnipotent divine being.

Following the Vedic ritual-sacrificial order (*yajña*) was, however, not the only way to realize *ṛta*. The sage could walk away from the social and ritual order, precisely because another modality of realizing *ṛta* was available to him. Yet, later Vedic interpretations emphasized the *mode* of realizing *ṛta* to an extent that eventually overwhelmed the concept itself. The ritual component, *yajña*, began to be seen as the end in itself.

Rukmani traces the development of telos from *ṛta*, to *yajña*, to dharma, and *mokṣa*. Dharma and *mokṣa* are not, of course, exclusive and dharma (particularly *varṇāśrama-dharma*) is seen as that which, properly fulfilled, leads to *mokṣa*. She examines the early Upaniṣads for the further development of these concepts and notes the different ways in which these early texts reference dharma in attempts to determine the proper ground for moral action. Rukmani argues for the clear presence of a moral directive in the early Upaniṣads, not in spite of, but because of their unitive vision.

Jeffrey D. Long's "Truth, Diversity, and the Unfinished Project of Modern Hinduism" is a constructive, philosophical-hermeneutical project that aims at a

reconceptualization of Neo-Vedanta. Long avers that Neo-Vedanta has yet to achieve its early aspirations towards universality and pluralism. Long takes, as his interpretive starting point, the thought of Ramakrishna, Aurobindo, and Gandhi, examines the potential for integration of certain elements of Whiteheadian Process philosophy and Jain thought into Neo-Vedanta. He explores the compatibility of these systems with Vedanta, as well as their potential, in combination, for the elicitation and expression of underlying suppositions about the nature of truth and religious diversity on the part of the three major Neo-Vedantic thinkers.

Long maintains that there are compelling affinities between aspects of Process thought and Neo-Vedanta that bear investigation and can provide bridges towards a more inclusive and broader horizon. In contradistinction to many writers on Hindu philosophy who warn against a conception of Hinduism that does not give due consideration to Indian cultural and historical factors, Long argues against a totally cultural definition of Hinduism in general, and Neo-Vedanta in particular, that ignores underlying truths and insights which have universal applicability. He aims to initiate a pluralistic, Hindu, cross-cultural hermeneutics that can contribute to the realization of Hinduism as a world religion.

Leena Taneja brings Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics into conversation with the implicit hermeneutical framework of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition, in "The Other of Oneself: A Gadamerian Conversation with *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*." A Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* tradition, *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, which spread across Northern India between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, espouses the doctrine of identity-in-difference (*acintyabhedabhedātattva*).

In Gadamer's hermeneutics, the "other" figures prominently as the catalyst for the growth of self-understanding. His dialogical concept of the "fusion of horizons" calls for a radical opening to the other in a mutually illuminating, intersubjective encounter. Yet, despite his revolutionary hermeneutical turn, Gadamer rarely engaged in such systematic intersubjective dialogue with partners from radically different backgrounds—dialogue that could have led to a true fusion of horizons. Taneja undertakes to push the Gadamerian initiative into just such a space. She notes that if, as Gadamer avers, the aim of all dialogical encounters is a deeper understanding of self and other, it becomes imperative that we determine the conditions that would enable us to hear the voice of the other.

In drawing the hermeneutics of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* into conversation with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Taneja uses a bi-level approach. First, as the partner in discourse with Gadamerian hermeneutics, the *Gauḍīya* tradition serves as the comparative other. Secondly, through her constructive hermeneutical engagement with *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, it becomes a subject from which she elicits elements of hermeneutical philosophy that lie latent within it. She achieves this by analyzing the principles of identity and difference, central to *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, evincing hermeneutical insights that illustrate how religious transformation can be both hermeneutical and dialectical. Her constructive engagement with the *Gauḍīya* tradition centers on the hermeneutical implications of a specific *Gauḍīya* religious practice (*rāgānugā bhakti sādhana*) in terms of relationality with God (Kṛṣṇa) and His play (*līlā*) as well as in distinction to the Gadamerian concept of "play" (*spiel*).

Using the two principles of identity and difference to demonstrate how they suggest two different types of communication/dialogue, she reveals how they coincide with Gadamer's struggle between method and its transcendence.

Some of the essays in this volume were originally presented as papers at a Panel on Hindu philosophy and hermeneutics at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. With this volume we do not simply appeal for a review of interpretive methods, but seek to forge a genuine intersubjective exchange—the problem is *verstehen*, the issue is hermeneutical. In this vein, the volume argues for a dialectical relationship that can and should lead to more works of this kind and hopefully greater chances of the emergence of mutual fecundation between the philosophical traditions of classical and contemporary India and the West.

Notes

[1] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Second Edition Trans. Revised Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p. 290.
[2] Ibid., pp. 168–169.
[3] Ibid., p. 101.
[4] D. Z. Phillips. *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[5] J. N. Mohanty. "A History of Indian Philosophy" in Elliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe eds. *A Companion to World Philosophies*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), pp. 1–4.
[6] *Philosophy East & West* Volume 42, Number 3 July 1992 397–406

The Hermeneutics of the Word "Religion" and Its Implications for the World of Indian Religions

Arvind Sharma

This essay consists of three parts. In the first part, the implications of the application of the Western word "religion" to religious phenomena beyond the Western world are adumbrated. In the second part, the effect of the actual application of the English word religion in its Western connotation to the world of Indian religions is analyzed. In the third and final part, corrective measures for dealing with the distortions described in part two are proposed.

The Word *Religion* in the Non-Western World

The two scholars who have been most explicit in developing the implications of the dimensions of the Western understanding of the word religion in the context of the global study of religion are Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Willard G. Oxtoby. Wilfred Cantwell Smith identified a tendency towards the reification of a religious tradition in the Western world after the Enlightenment, which had the effect of circumscribing it. He has dealt with this process in detail in his now well-known work: *The Meaning and End of Religion*. As Kenneth Cracknell notes: "In *The Meaning and End of Religion* Smith conclusively demonstrated that such terms as Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Confucianism were coined for the convenience of Western scholars. He showed that dates can be assigned to the earliest usages of such terms: "Boudhism" in 1801, "Hinduism" in 1829, "Taouism" in 1839, "Zoroasterianism" in 1854 and "Confucianism" in 1862. One has only to think of the widely disparate perceptions and attitudes that make up Indian religion to know this is profoundly misleading to lump these together as "Hinduism."[1]

Both these points—how the word religion got reified leading to its semantic circumscription and how this point applies with special force to Hinduism—need to be amplified in Professor Smith's own words. He writes regarding the first point:

> Previously, reference in the West to these traditions had taken a different form. The development in the seventeenth century of the phrase "the religion of" a given people,

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> we have already observed; this later appears for new groups, such as "the religion of the Japanese." Earlier, from mediaeval times, one finds "the sect of" or "the heresy of" a people, as in the Islamic case which we shall be investigating below. Later, one finds such phrases as "Chinese wisdom," "the philosophy of the Hindus"; also (early nineteenth century) "the religion of Buddha." The mid-nineteenth-century change to a newly coined proper name followed somewhat after the trend towards reification in the concept "religion" itself, which we have previously studied, and that towards a use of "Christianity" and "Judaism," which we shall investigate later in this chapter.
>
> The development was not haphazard: a pattern can, on inquiry, be discerned. The transition to a specific name did not take place in any of those cases where a people's religious life remained integrated and coterminous with their social existence. Thus the West has never developed a name for the religion of the Incas, of the Samoans, of the Babylonians, and so on for a long list. In cases, however, where the religious tradition of one community developed historically to transcend the boundaries of the people among whom it first arose, so that on a considerable scale men of other communities became converts to that tradition, or in those where, on the other hand, religious practices were followed by markedly less than all the members of a given society, then a name did arise to distinguish "the religion" from the social group. This process normally took the form of adding the Greek suffix "-ism" to a word used to designate the persons who are members of the religious community or followers of a given tradition.[2]

The special case of Hinduism he explains as follows:

> The arrival of the Muslims and their ideas was far from the first time that novel or discrepant views were being propounded or communities launched in India. The intellectual, theological, and religious ferment and variegated multiformity of the country had long been brisk. Many new patterns had arisen and many old ones had been criticized. Never before, however, had an organized, systematic, and exclusive community carrying (or being carried by) what was in theory an organized, systematic and exclusive idea arrived violently from the outside to reject all alternatives and to erect a great conceptual wall between those who did and those who did not belong. A boundary between non-Muslims (followers of indigenous ways, "Hindus") and Muslims was sharply drawn. Yet on the other side of the continuation of such boundaries so as to demarcate off a "Hindu" community from other Indian groups was not clear.
>
> Indeed, it is still not clear today. The census of India, 1941, gave up the attempt of previous British censuses (1931, 1921, and on back) to enumerate Hindus exactly. The census offices reported that they had been forced into a realization that the boundaries of Islam and Christianity were reasonably clear but that those of the Hindu community were not. They could draw a line discriminating Hindus from Christians and Muslims on the one side, but it was not possible to draw one discriminating them from animists on the other. This on the practical, operational side is an unwitting empirical confirmation of my theoretical point, that the concept of a religious system, whether ideal or sociological, is here alien and invalid. It is a Western (and Muslim) concept, which Westerners (and Muslims) have tried to impose upon their understanding of India; but it does not fit. There are Hindus, but there is no Hinduism.[3]

The complicity of Christianity however in this process must not be overlooked for there is a danger that one might. To a certain extent the Enlightenment was a movement against Christianity and this fact of intellectual history may predispose one against the possibility I wish to develop that both the influence of the Enlightenment and of Christianity—opposed as they might be—worked in the same direction so far as the understanding of Hinduism was concerned. Willard G. Oxtoby has pointed out that "when the Christian world of the West viewed the other traditions, it

sought to define them in terms parallel to the way it understood its own Christianity. The Christian historical self-understanding imposed three of its own predilections on what is described."[4]

The first predilection consists of the emphasis on creedal formulation of a religion. Willard Oxtoby explains:

> Among these was Christianity's emphasis on creeds, its desire to pin things down as affirmations of belief. One identified oneself as a Christian by declaring such-and-such about God, Jesus, and the world. So one expected the adherent of another tradition to have a contrasting set of creedal beliefs, which it would be the observer's task to formulate. Some of Asia's great traditions, such as Buddhism, do present substantial, sophisticated, and challenging doctrines, but in the case of Shinto, for instance, statements of doctrine are more of a collector's item.
>
> To expect every religion necessarily to have a systematic doctrine, then, is arbitrary. It excludes a vast and important range of humankind's religious activity from view. So "religion" defined as "belief" is not a descriptive definition of the spectrum of phenomena, but a prescriptive restriction to the narrower band within the spectrum that will fit the observer's stipulations.[5]

The second predilection Oxtoby identifies is the secular-sacred dichotomy which comes naturally to Christianity. He writes:

> A second Christian predilection is to impose on all religion Christianity's centuries-old institutional distinction between the sacred and the secular. Christianity started with three centuries of minority status before receiving state patronage, and consequently grew quite accustomed to the idea that some things belong to God and other things to Caesar. Even the medieval Latin church, at the height of its influence and in its struggles over authority with princes, took conspicuous note of the principle. One of the principal characteristics of modernity in the Euro-American West is a secularity that puts both intellectual and institutional limits on the sphere allocated to religion.
>
> To identify religion in contrast with what one regards as "secular" may be useful for understanding classical Christianity, but it has not proven helpful towards understanding classical Islam. Islam did not share Christianity's formative experience of 300 years as a minority. Islam was launched in Arabia as a total value system for society, including its laws and commerce and even warfare. In the Islamic case, virtually any aspect of culture and civilization is relevant to religion.
>
> The sacred-secular contrast is unhelpful, but for quite different reasons, when we consider Chinese thought of 2,500 years ago. The principal contribution of Confucius and his early successors was a humane social ethic: what in the West we might consider moral philosophy. Admittedly, Confucius made rhetorical references to Heaven, but he seems to have been rather agnostic about much of traditional religion and ritual in his day.[6]

Although both these predilections are consequential for our thesis, the most significant is the third predilection—that one can only follow one religion at a time. As Willard Oxtoby explains:

> A third Christian expectation concerning "religion" is the notion of exclusive membership. That God should demand loyalty and tolerate no rivals is part of the faith of Judaism, passed on to Christianity and Islam. Each of these three has been at pains to demarcate the boundaries of its community. However, a notion that if you follow one tradition, you cannot also follow another is not one that has always applied across southern and eastern Asia.
>
> For understanding the Sikh tradition, this matter is doubly relevant. The early Sikhs were disciples of a teacher who saw God as transcending all forms, including the boundaries of human communities of worshippers—limits made prominent by the coming of Islam,

a boundaried religion, to India. Four centuries after their founding teacher, however, some Sikh leaders were seeking strenuously to define their community in contrast to a Hindu population with whom they had a great deal in common. And five centuries after that teacher, misery persists as Sikhs contend that full recognition of that identity has been denied them.

Do boundaries help us to understand Japan? Studies report that only a small percentage of its population consider themselves as belonging to any religion, yet when surveys ask whether one follows Buddhist or Shinto or other rituals and practices, the positive responses add up to more people than there are in the country.[7]

All the three predilections constitute a nexus of understanding which puts the word "religion" at odds with the religious reality of Asia. This is dramatically highlighted by Julia Ching in her discussion of Far Eastern religions. On the point of exclusive adherence to a religion she writes:

A major difference between East Asian religious life and that of [modern] India and the West is that its communities are not completely separate. If you ask a Japanese, for instance, whether he or she is a believer in a particular religion, you may get the answer "no" (even the Japanese word for "no" is not a tightly defined a denial as is "no" in English). However, if you ask whether he or she adheres to Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, you may get the answer "yes" (albeit again a bit noncommittal compared with the English "yes"). Many Japanese follow more than one religion, even though they do not consider themselves very religious.[8]

She goes on to say:

Some scholars go so far as to say that the Chinese and Japanese have no religion, since their "religions" do not make the exclusive claims to truth and dogma so characteristic of Western religions. Others claim that China and Japan have no religion because their civilization is basically areligious and this-worldly. Still others, while granting that religion is present in East Asian civilization, find it so entwined in the culture itself that the two have become inseparable; they hold therefore that speaking about religion in such places as China is a useless exercise. Others are not always sure whether they should speak of "religion" in the singular or the plural.[9]

Her remarks on the matter of the relationship between religion and culture are equally significant. She writes:

We should make our own position clear. There is ground for confusion, we grant, because of the close ties between religion and culture. It is not easy to separate religion and culture in our discussions. This does not mean, however, that East Asian civilizations are areligious. Some people dismiss customs and rituals as superstitious, but others in the same culture see them as practical means of securing benefit in life. We should be aware that definitions of these traditions in the region are fluid, as distinct from the roles of religions of West Asian origin, like Christianity or Islam. Moreover, we think that the word "religion" need not be defined in exclusivist terms, in theist terms, or even in doctrinal terms.

We consider as religion all forces and institutions that function in East Asian society as does "religion" in Western society. That is why we include Confucianism and rival teachings in our discussions, while acknowledging that some regard them more as philosophy than as religion. We also call this section "East Asian Religions" in the plural because traditions exercising certain roles of "religion" can be identified as distinct and cohesive, despite intertwined origins and historical interactions. This is the case especially with Confucianism and Taoism.[10]

Julia Ching originally took up the case of Japan and it is helpful to revert to it because it presents a counterfactual case of what might have happened in India in the absence of Western imperial intervention. She writes in relation to what she said of the Japanese that

> Much the same can be said of the Chinese, the Koreans, or the Vietnamese. At issue is the inseparability between religion and culture in East Asia, as well as the syncretism or combination that characterizes all the major religions there. East Asians all assert the importance of cosmic and social harmony. Since harmony is highly valued, each of the religious traditions tends to meet some of the needs of the people. In spite of occasional religious conflicts, all tend to work together in a larger cultural and social context.[11]

Now the importance of treating India as modern India in the first citation from Julia Ching becomes clear. She brackets India and the West because, through colonization, Indian religious reality was shaped in the Western mould when, left on its own, it might have resembled that of Japan. This point will be developed further in the third part.

The Word *Religion* in India

In this part I shall develop the following six points: (1) that the Western hermeneutics of the word religion is conceptually foreign to India; (2) that its foreignness consists in the double implication of the word religion (a) that one may adhere to only one religion at a time or what may be called singular or unilateral religious participation and (b) that religion is separate from and separable from culture; (3) that this foreign concept of religion was institutionalized in India during the colonial period; (4) that the introduction of this foreign concept met with both acceptance and resistance in India; (5) that the tension generated by this dual reaction was foundational for the development of Hindutva ideology, which might not have arisen in a purely Indian context and that therefore (6) the hermeneutical approach of the West to the category of religion, and its application to India, is in a large measure responsible for the appearance of Hindu nationalism, specially as denoted by the word *Hindutva*.

We may begin by asking once again: What is the Western hermeneutics of the word religion? Many answers are possible in the present context as discussed in the first part of the paper but the one most relevant to the present discussion is the Western understanding that one may only owe allegiance to one religion at a time. Such an understanding of religion holds good for the West in both its modern and pre-modern phase.[12] In the pre-modern phase one could not be a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim at the same time. In the modern period this sense was carried over into the modern secularized understanding of religion.[13] Scholars have indeed wondered if one can ever "escape the vast implicit tautology that the religious is what the West considers religious on the basis of its own religious experience,"[14] namely, that religion implies exclusive adherence to one religion. In the case of Christianity there is a further point involved, that religion can be separated from culture.[15]

This concept of religion, as involving adherence to only one religion, was institutionalized in India through the agency of the British census and subsequently in separate electorates for the Muslims and the Sikhs.[16] The fact that the term could not be applied to India without struggle is illustrative of the thesis of this presentation. I mentioned above that the Western concept of religion in India was institutionalized through the agency of the British census. Such a census was introduced on a nationwide basis in 1881 but the problems posed by the application of the Western concept of religion did not fail to crop up even earlier or later. Allow me to illustrate this point in the context of first Hindu-Sikh and then Hindu-Muslim identities.

"In the preliminary Punjab census Sikhs were included as Hindus, but from 1868 onwards they were listed separately. No clear definition was supplied until the 1891 census, when enumerators were instructed to return as Sikhs those who followed the Khalsa order."[17] Hugh McLeod goes on to point out that "by 1911, however, it was realized that the 1891 tests were being generally ignored and it was accordingly decided to enter as a Sikh every person who claimed to be one."[18] It is however what he says next which is crucial for our discussion. He adds: "A new category that of 'Sikh-Hindu,' was also permitted. The same procedure was repeated in 1921, clearly implying that, although administrators are meant to be neat and precise, this particular tangle had proved to be too daunting to unravel."[19]

The issue of who is a Sikh was ultimately resolved legally in 1925, in a way which registers the triumph of the Western concept of religion over the Indic. The Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, Chapter 1 "defined a Sikh as 'a person who professes the Sikh religion'; adding that the following declaration should be required if any doubt should arise: 'I solemnly affirm that I am a Sikh, that I believe in the Guru Granth Sahib, that I believe in the ten Gurus and *that I have no other religion*."[20]

One can identify here the precise point at which the Western concept of religion has begun to shape the Indian reality, when the phrase "I have no other religion" is formally made part and parcel of the self-identity of a Sikh.

The situation of a "35,000-strong community of 'Hindu-Muhammadans' in Gujarat" from broadly the same period illustrates the same problem in the context of Hindu-Muslim identity. When the Bombay census superintendent expressed his inability to qualify them as either Hindu or Muslim on account of community's "inextricable combination of multiple practices," he was "pulled up sharply by his superior, census Commissioner E.A. Gait, who ordered the location of the 'persons' concerned to one or another as best as he could."[21]

The introduction of such an exclusive concept of religion in India produced a mixed reaction. We have seen above how the Sikhs, or a section of the Sikhs, gradually accepted it.[22] It was less problematical in the case of a Hindu-Muslim context because, by and large, Islam shares this view of religion as involving exclusive adherence, although it was challenged in India from time to time. A Brahmin, named variously as Lodhan or Bodhan, was ultimately executed for claiming, during the period of the Delhi Sultanate, that *both* Hinduism and Islam were true. He was given the opportunity to convert to Islam before the sentence was carried out—which highlights the point of exclusive adherence under discussion.[23] By the Mughal period,

however, the situation seems to have changed somewhat, leading Dara Shikoh to propose that the Qur'àn may be interpreted in the light of the Vedas.

During the period of Muslim rule over India, however, the *Indians themselves* had not yielded to such a definition of a religion the way they did under British rule when some sections, such as the Sikhs, began to accept this as part of their self-definition. That this concept has left its mark on India is illustrated by its implicit adoption by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in 1956 when many Dalits converted to Buddhism under his leadership. "The oldest Buddhist monk in India initiated him, and then Ambedkar administered the three refuges, the five vows, and *twenty-four oaths of his own devising* to an assembled multitude that may have numbered half a million people."[24]

Some of these additional oaths involve the repudiation of the gods of Hinduism. The original formula for accepting Buddhism does not contain any such exclusionary statements. That it was not intended to be so is supported by the fact that the Buddha allowed his Jaina converts to continue to patronize Jainism and *Bràhminhood* is seen as one of the highest virtues of a Buddhist monk (*Vin*.III.72).[25]

The *additional* twenty-two vows, that is, in addition to the three refuges which Dr. Ambedkar introduced, include the following:

(1) I will not regard Brahma, Vishnu or Mahadev as gods and I will not worship them.
(2) I will not regard Rama and Krishna as gods and I will not worship them.
(3) I will not honour Gauri, Ganpati or any god of Hinduism and I will not worship them.
(4) I do not believe that God has taken any avatar.
(5) I agree that the propaganda that the Buddha was the avatara of Vishnu is false and mischievous.
(6) I will not do the ceremony of *shraddhapaksh* (for the departed) or *pindadana* (gifts in honour of the deceived).[26]

Even these are not really problematical when it comes to the Indic concept of religion because one could continue to follow any of the many practices of of tradition and not abandon one's affiliation. It can only be done by specific repudiation which is contained in the nineteenth vow and once again, as in the case of Sikh Gurdwaras Act, represents the triumph of the Western concept of religion over the Indic. It runs as follows:

> *I renounce the Hindu religion* which has obstructed the evolution of my former humanity and considered humans unequal and inferior.[27]

The application of the Western concept of religion under British Raj thus began to promote the growth of exclusive religious identities. Such exclusion, when posited between Hinduism and Islam, created problems in the case of some communities in India but did not, on the whole, generate the same degree of anxiety as its application to other religions of Indian origin, such as Sikhism, for the "Hindu" community at large. This is clear from the numerous references to the Sikhs contained in that foundational work of *Hindutva*, called by the same name, when it appeared in the

1920s.[28] The question the "Hindu" community now faced was: How does it maintain its integrity in the face of the centrifugal tendencies generated by the introduction of the exclusive concept of religion on what it considered its home ground, characterized by multiple religious participation?

The solution which V.D. Savarkar proposed was based on a feature of Hinduism which distinguishes it from Christianity, namely, that, within it, religion and culture are not distinguished as they are in the West. Savarkar proposed a solution based on the claim that Hinduism was *both* a religion and a *culture*. So even if some religions of Indian origin began to consider themselves as *religions* distinct from Hinduism, they could still be seen as sharing the Hindu *cultural* milieu. As the word *Hinduism* had already acquired the connotation of a religion, he coined the word *Hindutva* to denote this "Hindu" culture shared by the various religions of Indian origin such as Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism, and of course, Hinduism.

In other words, Savarkar was trying to maintain the unity and integrity of the Indic religious tradition, threatened by the application of the exclusive Western concept of *religion* to it, by drawing upon another feature of the use of the word in the West itself—its distinction from *culture*—as a remedy for what he perceived as the problem caused by the introduction of the Western concept of religion in the Indian melieu. This is how the matter may be stated from a Western point of view. From an Indic point of view both the Western connotations of the word—as setting one religion apart from another, and setting religion apart from culture, were doubtful starters, to begin with.

Now we can see how the concept of *Hindu Rashtra*, or a nation which rests on Hindu *cultural* foundations, emerges as a counterthrust to the *religious* divisiveness introduced by the Western use of the word religion in the Indian context, when it began to shape the Indian reality in its own terms.

Hindutva thus represents one important dimension of Hinduism's socio-political response to Western hermeneutical theories of religion.

What's in a Name?

It is thus clear that the introduction of the Western concept of religion under British rule, first intellectually and then administratively was *not a descriptive but a prescriptive act*. This is the crucial conclusion which emerges from a consideration of the first two parts. The standard understanding of the situation we have at the moment runs somewhat at follows.[29] The British came to India to trade in 1600. Subsequently a series of political events culminated in the establishment of British supremacy over India. This land, whose possession the British acquired, consisted of many religions whose *content* differed from that of Christian religion but formal commitment to whom in terms of allegiance was presumed by the British to take the same form. The British government carried out a census in which the various subjects of the empire identified the various religions to which they belonged, in order to assist the British government in the task of carrying out the administration of this vast population. As the Indian people evolved towards self-government

under the dispensation of the British Raj, questions arose regarding the form such a post-Raj government might take. As the political denouement approached, the substantial Muslim minority in the British dominions increasingly felt that its political interests could not be adequately protected in a Hindu-majority India and their fears were taken into account by creating a nation of Pakistan out of the Muslim-majority provinces, which seceded from the Indian union thereby leading to the replacement of British rule in India by the two countries of India and Pakistan in 1947.

The fact this plausible narrative assumes is that the vocabulary of the English language, in dealing with the Indian reality, described that reality as it actually existed; that it meant the same thing to say that the population of United Kingdom consisted of Christians and Jews and that of India of Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jainas, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and so on. In other words the English language was a plane mirror on the surface of which the Indian reality was reflected exactly as it was. The application of the hermeneutical method to this depiction results in the realization that the English language did not serve as a plane mirror but contained elements of concavity and convexity as a mirroring surface for the Indian reality, which meant that when it did reflect Indian reality it also, in the process of reflecting it, distorted it in such a way that the distortion was carried back into the field because the language through which the country was being administered was English.

This point is potentially enormously consequential. It could be argued, for instance, that even the distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim was not as cut-and-dry as might be presumed on the ground that at least Islam would conform to the picture of unique allegiance of the Abrahamic type. I am making this point to bring into play the illuminating property of the extreme case as a way of illustrating the force of the argument.

Although one is accustomed to looking at the Indian historical reality in terms of a Hindu-Muslim polarity, this must always be tempered with a recognition of the pluralism that characterized India. There were always many castes and kingdoms, and after *c*. 1000, just as there could be castes which are not Hindu, so too there could be kingdoms which were not Hindu. But just as the broad framework of multiple castes could accommodate aberrations or deviations or exceptions, so could the multiple kingdoms accommodate the new Muslim kingdoms, thereby continuing rather than replacing the tradition of "intense militarism of ancient [pre-Muslim] India."[30] It is perhaps worth comparing the situation in India with that in China here and to recognize that "Sanskritization differs from sinicization in that it is a more pluralistic, less unitary process."[31]

The social pluralism of caste and the political pluralism of multiple kingdoms also played off each other to produce the same outcome all the more. The significance of the following fascinating details passes beyond the level of the anecdotal in this light: that the "iconoclast Mahmūd of Ghazna permitted image worship to his Hindu subjects in their separate quarters in his own capital,"[32] and "at least three Hindu generals, Sundar, Nath, and Tilak rose to positions of high responsibility in the Ghazanawid army"[33]; and that while Fīrūz Tughluq pursued theocratic policies "his bodyguard consisted of Ràjputs headed by Bhīrū Bhaṭṭī, a relative of his

mother."[34] It is not being claimed either that the Hindu and Muslim communities had evolved into or towards a single culture, nor is the opposite being claimed—that they remained poles apart beneath a veneer of accord. The claim is much more modest—that the social, political and religious pluralism of the Indian reality allowed for a certain measure of permeability, malleability and fluidity which may have been *subsequently* lost.[35]

The problem of boundaries with respect to Hindu religion in general is a difficult one and seems to become more so "during 'early medieval' or 'late medieval'/'early modern' periods, areas which are the battle ground between conventional and progressive historians" in India now-a-days. On numerous occasions Hindus and Muslims are *not* distinguished as such, while communities within them are, during the 'early medieval period.'[36]

The word Hindustān is of special interest here, for as an adjectival form of Hindustàn, it opens up another vista of meaning. If one sense of the word Hindustàn includes all Indians and another only Hindus, then in its adjectival form it seems to reach out for a sense which reconciles both, and specially Hindus and Muslims. This is most obvious in the pre-Partition proposal that India's *lingua franca* be Hindustani which steers a middle course between a Sanskritising Hindi, and a Persianising and Arabising Urdu, as the language of the undivided subcontinent. In this sense of happy compromise the word seems to go back a few centuries. Bàbur, for instance, even thought that the Indians—Hindus and Muslims together, had evolved their own way of living together with each other by the time the foundations of the Moghul Empire were laid by him in India. He called it the Hindustani way.[37]

Harjot S. Oberoi has drawn pointed attention to this aspect of fluid religious loyalties in the "early Modern" period,[38] which William H. Sleeman experienced first hand in 1849 when he passed through Bahraich. He thought it "strange" that Hindus should revere the "Muslim" shrine there of Sayyid Salàr as much as the Muslims: "All our Hindu camp followers paid as much reverence to the shrine as they passed as the Mahomedans. . . . The Hindoos worshipped any sign of manifested might or power, though exerted against themselves."[39]

The point then is that, in the pre-1900 period, lateral accommodation of non-Hindu elements in general and Muslims in particular was possible at the social and political levels. Moreover, these traditions themselves—the Hindu and Muslim—were plural in nature, a fact which further coincided with the process and furthered it.

Such accommodation was no longer possible after a point under British rule[40] because of the simultaneous development of the concept of *nation* and of monolithic *religions*. The first development meant that political differences based on religion could not be accommodated regionally. Given the emergent concept of a nation they had to be dealt with at the national level, in the singular. Moreover, the monolithisation of the Hindu and Islamic traditions closed off the fissures of adjustment between them socially and locally, and made them face, and then confront, each other as single consolidated entities. The rules by which the game had to be played now were radically altered, in terms of both the players and the playing field.

The contribution which the introduction of the Western concept of religion made to the development of this climate of exclusivism was documented in part two of this paper.

One must now turn from the past reality, even if it is the recent past, to the present reality. The logic of this paper leads to the conclusion that the concept of identifying one person with only one religion, as practiced by the Indian census even today, continues the semantic tradition of the British Raj. This distortion needs to be prevented. One must be at liberty to indicate the number of religions one considers oneself an adherent of and it need not be one, as in the case of Japan.

According to the present method of determining religious affiliation, one person must specify only one religion. This view, however, that one can follow only one religion at a time reflects a *Western* concept of religion, according to which one can only adhere to one religion at a time. Indian religious reality, by contrast, permits multiple religious participation as well as multiple religious affiliations.

Three points are particularly significant in this respect. (1) When the British Government had to actually face such a problem, it was resolved arbitrarily and imperialistically by forcing a choice on the people. The case of the "35,000-strong community of 'Hindu-Muhammadans' in Gujarat" was mentioned earlier, which caused such a headache to the British authorities.[41] Indian reality was *falsified* here to conform to the Western notion that belonging to a religion implies *exclusive* adherence to it. (2) The point can now be reinforced with the help of the example of Japan. Such an exclusive concept of religion was not forced by the West on Japan, with the consequence that the results of its religious census appear as follows for the year 1985:

Buddhist	92,000,000 persons	76% of population
Shinto	115,000,000 persons	95% of population
Christian	1,000,000 person	–
New religions	14,000,000 persons	–
Total	223,000,000 persons	–

The total population of Japan in 1985 was 121,000,000.[42]

(3) Should not the Indian census also add a new category of *sarvadharmã* (one who believes in "all religions") *since there is already a category for no religion*? Such a category is arguably more easily conceived in India than elsewhere. Should India henceforth not replace the present Western mode and now follow its own mode of census-taking when it comes to religion? And if not, why not?

Conclusion

India and the West do not share the same concept of religion. When the Indian census uses a Western concept of religion for determining religious adherence, it distorts *the Indian reality instead of reflecting it*. The purpose of a census is to

reflect religious reality, not to distort it. Henceforth Indians should be permitted to state multiple religious affiliations, when such multiple affiliations are constitutive of their self-perception and self-definition. The time has come for Indians to pose this question to themselves: Should *Indian* reality continue to be changed to conform to the linguistic conventions of *European* languages?

Notes

[1] Kenneth Cracknel, ed., *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001) p. 16.
[2] Ibid., p. 161.
[3] Ibid., p. 163.
[4] Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 488.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 488–489.
[7] Ibid., p. 489–490.
[8] Julia Ching, "East Asian Religions", in Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., op. cit., p. 348.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., p. 348–349.
[11] Ibid., p. 348.
[12] See Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge and Ideology* (tr. William Sayers. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003).
[13] See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963).
[14] Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*, p. 10.
[15] Winston L. King, "Religion", in Mircea Eliade, editor in chief, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987) Vol. 12, p. 282–286.
[16] Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 168; W.H. McLeod, *infra*, p. 90.
[17] W.H. McLeod, *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 86.
[18] Ibid., p. 87.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., emphasis added.
[21] Sumit Sarkar, "Conversion and Politics of the Hindu Right", *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 26, 1999, p. 1694.
[22] But see Paramjit S. Judge, "Politics of Sikh Identity and Its Fundamentalist Assertion", *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 28, 2004, pp. 3947–3954.
[23] Hameed-Ud-Din, "The Lodis", in R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Delhi Sultunate* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990) p. 147.
[24] Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (second edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) Vol. II, p. 347, emphasis added.
[25] K.T.S. Sarao, *Origin and Nature of Ancient Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: R&R Publishers, 1999) p. 116 note 20.
[26] Gail Omvedt, *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003) p. 262.
[27] Ibid., emphasis added.
[28] V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* (Bombay: Savarkar Sadan, 1969 [1923]) passim.
[29] This section draws substantially on my paper entitled: "On Hindu, Hindustn, Hinduism and Hindutva", *Numen* 49:1–36 (2002).

[30] A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1967) p. 123.
[31] Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Presidential Address: State Formation in Asia—Prolegomenon to a Comparative Study", *Journal of Asian Studies* (1987) p. 741.
[32] Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) p. 90.
[33] Ibid., p. 101.
[34] Ibid., p. 102.
[35] Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", in David Ludden, ed., *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) pp. 277–278.
[36] Brajdulal Chattopadhyay, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) passim.
[37] Ashok Kumar Shrivastava, *Hindu Society in the Sixteenth Century (with Special Reference to Northern India)* (New Delhi: Milind Publications Private Ltd., 1981) p. 12.
[38] Harjot S. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[39] André Wink, *Al Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990) Vol. 2, p. 133.
[40] Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999) p. 29.
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Max Müller and Textual Management: A Postcolonial Perspective

Sharada Sugirtharajah

First, a brief word about postcolonialism.[1] Postcolonialism is one of the latest theoretical categories to enter academic discourse. Each discipline has come up with its own definition of postcolonialism and has appropriated it to suit its own academic needs. Postcolonial theory has been used in many different ways – as a methodological approach, as a resistant or oppositional strategy, or as a discursive category. As with any critical category, postcolonialism is not without limitations, but nevertheless it is a highly serviceable category. The aim of postcolonial criticism is to interrogate textual, historical, ethnographic, visual and other representations of societies which were badly affected by the historical reality of colonial presence and domination. It is about how colonizers constructed images of the colonized, as well as how the colonized themselves made use of these images as a counter-tool to combat negative portrayals and to construct a new identity. Postcolonial theory is useful in that it reveals the link between knowledge and power and between representation and mediation, and highlights homogenizing, essentializing and universalising tendencies in varied discourses, reading and interpretative strategies. I will mainly use postcolonialism as a hermeneutical tool to interrogate Max Müller's construction of Hinduism. The chapter[2] will look at Müller's treatment of the Veda, under the following three theoretical categories: colonial patronage, trope of the child and classification.

Colonial Patronage

Ever since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the connection between knowledge and power cannot be ignored. Drawing on the Foucaultian thesis that knowledge is inextricably linked with power, Said shows that the production of knowledge about the Orient by the West, is not an innocent activity. The Orientalist pursuit of knowledge was inextricably bound up with the desire for colonial expansion and domination. A significant number of textual projects (from editing

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R.D. Sherma, A. Sharma (eds.), *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Toward a Fusion of Horizons*,

to translation of Sanskrit texts) were initiated, approved and authorized by the colonial government, from the eighteenth century onwards. In the first place, it is the West's power over the East that facilitated the production of knowledge about the East, and this in turn fortified the power of the West over the East. Müller's undertaking of textual production of the *Sacred Books of the East* falls into the category of what, in postcolonial discourse, is termed colonial patronage. The term Patronage

> refers to the economic or social power that allows cultural institutions and cultural forms to come into existence and be valued and promoted. Patronage can take the form of a simple and direct transaction, such as the purchase or commissioning of works of art by wealthy people, or it can take the form of the support and recognition of social institutions that influence the production of culture. (Ashcroft et al 1998:43)

For example, Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavadgita*, and Müller's translation and edition of the six-volume *Rig Veda*, which had the financial backing of the East India Company, were not totally apolitical ventures.[3] Müller's translation project also had the support of royal patronage. In the colonial reversal of roles, the then Prince of Wales took with him numerous copies of Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* to be given as gifts to Indian kings during the Durbar.[4] True, early Orientalist-administrators such as Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones were more appreciative of India and its culture than many scholars were, but these Orientalists believed that the sound knowledge of Hindu beliefs and practices gained from their texts would be politically beneficial inasmuch as it would enable them to exercise effective control over the natives. As Eric Sharpe remarks: "The reason why East India Company in London had been prepared to fund the first translation of the Gita was partly that they had allowed themselves to be persuaded that it might prove politically expedient for them to do so... Max Müller's text of the *Rig Veda* was funded by the same commercial company on the same grounds" (Sharpe 1985:45).

Müller's translation projects not only legitimized British colonial rule but also justified intellectual and spiritual conquest. By the early nineteenth-century most of the Indian subcontinent came under the purview of the British East India Company, and by the middle of the nineteenth century British rule had been firmly established. Reflecting the mood of the time, Müller not only spoke approvingly of the establishment of British rule but also of the need to colonize India's minds. He spoke of "the conquest of the world by means of commerce, colonization, education, and conversion" (Müller 1902a:289). Urging young British civil servants to undertake the study of Sanskrit, Müller declared that "the material conquest of India" alone will not suffice, and that Britain ought not to leave "the intellectual conquest" of India to other countries. In his letter to Cowell to whom the book *India: What Can It teach Us?* is dedicated, Müller remarks: "... You know that at present and for sometime to come *Sanskrit scholarship means discovery and conquest*" (Müller 1892:vi, emphasis mine).

Müller's translating activities are neither innocent nor altruistic. First, let me briefly spell out Müller's own attitude to the *Sacred Books of the East* to which he devoted most of his working life. Müller makes clear that one of the principal aims of translating the *Sacred Books of the East* is "to assist missionaries"

(Müller 1902b:455), although he was the subject of trenchant missionary criticism. In his letter to Lady Welby dated 25 July, 1879, he assures her that the translation of the *Sacred Books of the East* "will do a great deal towards lifting Christianity into its high historical position" (Müller 1902b:67). In his letter to the Dean of St. Paul's, Müller remarks: "I have myself the strongest belief in the growth of Christianity in India" (Müller 1902a:332). As will be seen later, Müller values the Veda not so much for its spiritual import as for its archival worth. In his view, most of the material is unintelligible, that it is of no use except to an historian. "It cannot be too strongly stated," Müller remarks, "that the chief, and, in many cases, the only interest of . . . the only interest of the Sacred Books of the East is historical; that much in them is extremely childish, tedious, if not repulsive; and that no one but the historian will be able to understand the important lessons which they teach" (Müller 1902b:11). It is ironical that Müller should have spent all his time and his energies on studying, translating and editing the *Sacred Books of the East* which he felt were worthless except as antiquarian documents. While speaking of his gratitude to the East India Company for the publication of the *Rig Veda*, Müller remarks that "such a publication would have ruined any bookseller, for it must be confessed, that there is little that is attractive in the Veda, nothing that could excite general interest. From an aesthetic point of view, no one would care for the hymns of the Rig-veda. . . " (Müller 1875:367). He firms up his view by quoting Colebrooke who saw the Veda as being "too voluminous for a complete translation, and what they contain would hardly reward the labour of the reader, much less that of the translator" (ibid.:368).

Trope of the Child

One of the significant features of postcolonial discourse is theorization of the trope of the child. The trope of the child functions as a useful hermeneutical device to represent the Other, and to establish a link between the invader and invaded. More importantly, it situates the former in a position of superiority. As Ashcroft remarks:

> The child, at once both other and same, holds in balance the contradictory tendencies of imperial rhetoric: authority is held in balance with nurture; domination with enlightenment; debasement with idealization; negation with affirmation; exploitation with education; filiation with affiliation. This ability to absorb contradiction gives the binary parent/child an inordinate hegemonic potency. (Ashcroft 2001:36–37)

The trope of the child serves a number of purposes useful to the colonizer: it allows the colonizer to exercise his benevolent parental authority over colonial subjects. For the colonial parent the child symbolizes a state of innocence, unspoiled purity or a natural state, and therefore the child cannot exercise its rational faculties. The colonial parent now becomes the guardian into whose care colonial subjects are entrusted. In other words, the colonial parent takes upon himself/herself the responsibility of looking after the physical, mental, moral and spiritual welfare of colonial children. The problem is that the child is never allowed to grow; its identity is permanently fixed and frozen.

What I aim to demonstrate is that the trope of the child is at work in Müller's appropriation of the Veda. Firstly, Müller views the Veda from a nineteenth-century Western evolutionary perspective . He establishes an evolutionary link between the Veda and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: the former representing the first "stammerings" of a child and the latter the mature thinking of a human being. He states that "while in the Veda, we may study the childhood, we may study in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* the perfect manhood of the Aryan mind" (Müller 1901:249). In other words, for Müller, the religious journey begins with the Veda – symbolizing childhood innocence – and attains maturity in Kant's *Critique*. He remarks: "In the Veda we see how the Divine appears in the fire, and in the earthquake.... In Kant's *Critique* the Divine is heard in the still small voice – the Categorical Imperative – the I Ought – which Nature does not know and cannot teach" (ibid.:249).

Müller fixes the historical value and meaning of the Veda by placing it at the lowest end of the evolutionary scale (starting not with the beast as in Darwin but with the child).[5] For him, the Vedic hymns represent "the lowest stratum in the growth of the human mind that can be reached anywhere by means of contemporaneous literature" (Müller 1902a:271). He affirms the Veda but only as a product of an infantile mind which lacks the rationality of a mature adult. For Müller, the Vedic sage is but a child – a noble savage. Critiquing the anthropological significance attached to the term "savage," meaning primitive or "uncivilized," Müller introduces two classes of savages – "*progressive*" and "*retrogressive*" – signifying "a hopeful and a hopeless barbarism"; "a growing and a decaying civilization" (Müller 1901:156). In his view, "Man certainly began as a savage, but as a progressive savage" (1901:178), regressing now and then, only to rise again. A "retrogressive savage" is one who has descended from a higher state but has the possibility of ascending again (Müller 1901:156). Müller puts forward the much-favoured Orientalist thesis – that Hindus had reached a higher stage of civilization but had regressed into a state of barbarism. Hindus in their present state have lost touch with their archaic purity which Müller seeks to recover for them, but his thesis does not end with this. Once the lost childhood is regained, Hindus need nurturing in order to grow into full maturity. Hindus could regain their ancient purity with the help of the evolved European culture. The Vedic child is always a child; it needs the nurturing parent to facilitate its growth into full maturity. The child lacks the necessary stimulus (reason and logic), which can be offered only by the European colonial parent. Whether the colonized cultures are thought of in terms of "primitive savage" or "progressive savage," the concept "savage" itself legitimises colonial intervention and the exercise of authority over the colonized in the interests of those colonized. Müller's idea of "a progressive savage" implies the possibilities of evolution and fulfilment in a higher and universal truth, which, in his view, is no other than Christianity in its non-ecclesiastical form. In construing Hindus as locked in their infancy, Müller renders them powerless, in need of the help of enlightened cultures.

The construction of the Veda as an untainted document enables Müller to romanticize about Europe's supposed lost innocence. He is mainly interested in the Veda, not so much for its own worth but for the light it sheds on a supposed common Aryan ancestry whereby Indians and Europeans belong to the same race

(Müller 1892:116). He tells young British men that there is in the Veda "something that concerns ourselves, something of our own intellectual growth, some recollections, as it were, of our own childhood, or at least of the childhood of our race" (Müller 1892:254). It is this innocent past that Müller is keen to resurrect or rather construct – an uncontaminated past free from any "foreign influence" (Müller 1892:140). He sets himself the momentous task of recovering the Veda, which he calls Europe's "oldest inheritance", and making it accessible to the European world (Müller 1902b:74).

In brief, this section problematizes the conventional perception of Müller as a benevolent interpreter of the Veda. Müller's affirmation of the Veda has more to do with its significance as an antiquated document than with its spiritual content. For Müller, the Veda is significant for the study of the origin and evolution of religious ideas but only as an infantile document of great historical worth.

Classification

Naming or classifying the Other is not peculiar to any one culture; it occurs within and across cultures. In nineteenth century colonial discourse, classification was a way of domesticating and appropriating the Other on terms congenial to the colonizer. David Spurr regards classification itself as an ideologically charged rhetorical strategy. He remarks: "Within the realm of discourse, classification performs this policing function, assigning positions, regulating groups, and enforcing boundaries" (Spurr 1993:63). Classification meant reordering and restructuring in terms of the modernist norms and values of the European Enlightenment. The collecting and cataloguing of texts, artifacts, trees, plants, seeds, and animals of non-western peoples were clear markers of colonial dominance in nineteenth-century India. Classification, naming and mapping the Other, was a way of asserting European supremacy. The invader worked on the assumption that the cultures of the invaded were "chaotic," in need of reordering and categorizing . Müller's theory of the science of religion resonates with the nineteenth-century discourse of colonial science. Gyan Prakash demonstrates that colonial science worked on the premise that the natives' knowledge of their agricultural products was muddled, requiring reorganization, and that the natives needed to be educated in the science of classification. He explains: "If one aim of colonial pedagogy was to instruct peasants by exhibiting their own products and knowledge organized and authorized by the science of classification, its other aim was to render manifest the principle of function so that it could be applied to improve production" (Prakash 1999:23). A similar exercise is evident in Müller's classification of religions and their texts along evolutionary lines. Müller applies a modified version of the nineteenth-century evolutionary hypothesis in order to grade religious texts. He classifies the sacred texts of different religions in a hierarchical order. He places the New Testament at the top, and the Veda is assigned the second lowest position, followed by the Zoroastrian Avesta (1902b:322). Commenting that such a classification may not be acceptable to others, he goes on to point out that in terms of ethical teaching Christian scriptures

score higher than other sacred texts, and that this is what makes the Bible distinctive (Müller 1902b:322–23). In his letter to Rev. Cox (June 1885), Müller states that "the Old Testament stands on a higher ethical stage than other sacred books – it certainly does not lose by a comparison with them" (Müller 1902b:174). He uses the prevailing pietistic theology of the time (the Fall, punishment and redemption) as a hermeneutical key to compare the Christian texts with other texts, thereby establishing the primacy of the Christian texts. While other sacred texts have only a nominal value, Christian texts are seen as having a real value. Müller locates a purified form of Christianity in biblical texts and considers this to be the religion of humanity and the fulfilment of all religions. He declares that "if Christianity were not only preached, but lived in that spirit, it would then prove itself what it is – the religion of humanity at large, large enough itself to take in all shades and diversities of character and race" (Müller 1875:276). In his estimation, Hinduism and other religions lack something that Christianity has, which is the special revelation of the love of God for humanity. It is this "Gospel which will conquer other religions" (Ibid.:278). He makes clear the hermeneutical aim of his science of religion, which is to compare and contrast religions and establish which of them is better than the other. Although Müller challenges the exclusive claims made for Christianity, by subjecting all religions including Christianity to a comparative and historical-critical method, his eventual aim is to demonstrate that such a scrutiny would not endanger Christianity but rather would place it higher in the evolutionary scheme. He remarks:

> The Science of Religion will for the first time assign to Christianity its right place among the religions of the world; it will show for the first time fully what was meant by the fullness of time; it will restore to the whole history of the world, in its unconscious progress towards Christianity, its true and sacred character. (Müller 1868:xx)

Müller's aim is to demonstrate that such a classification would give a clear insight into the origin and evolution of the religious ideas of humankind. To put it concisely, Müller's evolutionary hypothesis legitimates a hierarchical view of religions. Implicit in Müller's evolutionary paradigm is the modernist notion of a single universal standard of truth applicable to all cultures – a standard by which they can be evaluated. While Müller's inclusivist approach to other religions challenges Christian exclusivist attitudes, at the same time it denies them any independent agency.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, I would like to draw attention to some hermeneutical presuppositions undergirding Müller's appropriation of the Veda. One, Müller sees himself as having the hermeneutical key to unlock the original meaning of the Veda. The nineteenth-century European search for "origins" is reflected in Müller's approach to the Veda. In his introduction to the *Upanishads* which he translated, Müller states:

> But I know full well how much still remains to be done, both in restoring a correct text, and in discovering the original meaning of the Upanishads; and I have again and again had to translate certain passages tentatively only, or following the commentators, though conscious all the time that the meaning which they extract from the text cannot be the right one. (Müller 1884:xii)

He employs what was known at that time in biblical circles as higher criticism (later to be called historical criticism) in order to discern the "original" meaning of the Veda. Müller warns that any tampering with the meaning of the Veda would result in the loss of its real worth. One of the tasks of historical criticism is to look for the "Ur text." In his approach to the Veda Müller is engaged in a similar task of going back to an "Ur text" and recovering the "true Gospel" in it. He assumes the role of a Protestant reformer and wants to rescue the Veda and recover its "original" meaning for Hindus. In other words, he engages in a textual cleansing mission – he wants to restore Hinduism to its pristine form.[6] Like other Orientalists, Müller, too, constructs a picture of a magnificent age of Hindus which he locates in the Veda. He urges Hindus to go back to the Veda to recover the lost purity of their tradition but at the same time cautions that the purity of the Veda is of a primitive kind and therefore cannot provide a sound basis for reformed Hinduism. He exhorts the members of the Brahmo Samaj to look for guidance in the New Testament (1902b:390). He reckons that Hindus will be able appreciate the true value of the Veda if they accept it " as an ancient *historical* document, containing thoughts in accordance with the character of an ancient and simple-minded race of men..." (Müller 1902b:110). Claiming that he has the necessary knowledge to make an historical assessment of the Veda, Müller urges Hindus to accept his verdict. Müller warns that to look for a rational religion or signs of modernity is contrary to the spirit of the Veda.[7] In other words, he cautions Hindus not to look in it for modern Western scientific, philosophical and rational categories or moral values (ibid.:110).

Two, Müller brings his Protestant presuppositions about the written word to his study of the Veda. For most Hindus the meaning of a text is not confined to nor firmly entrenched in the written word. European Orientalists, for whom the written word is paramount, tended to view oral transmission of sacred knowledge not only as an inferior mode of communication but as a sign of backwardness. For Hindus, however, the orality of their texts (both *sruti* and *smrti*) signified a highly developed spiritual culture. In fact, the act of writing was regarded as polluting. The sacrality of the Veda was retained in oral form before it was committed to writing, and even to this day oral recitation of the Veda and even *smrti* texts such as the *Ramayana* is highly preferred and valued.

European scholars have laid undue emphasis on the written word. It has been of utmost significance for Europeans since the seventeenth century, signifying a certitude of meaning, stability and security that orality was considered to be lacking. As Bernard Cohn states:

> Meaning for the English was something attributed to a word, a phrase, or an object, which could be determined and translated, at best with a synonym that had a direct referent to something in what the English thought of as a "natural world". Everything had a more or less specific referent for the English. With Indians, meaning was not necessarily constructed in the same fashion. The effect and affect of hearing a Brahman chant in Sanskrit at a sacrifice did not entail meaning in the European sense; it was to have one's substance literally affected by the sound. (Cohn 1996:18–19)

What Müller's *The Sacred Books of the East* project did was to privilege the written word. That is, the printed page became the means of revelation. The written text was seen as a mark of modernity and progress, and the oral text as primitive. For

missionaries, the written word was not merely a mark of civilization; salvation was to be mediated through the word. The outcome of such an exercise resulted in the production of textual knowledge about Hinduism that had little relevance to the vast majority of Hindus whose lives were not directly informed by written texts. As pointed out elsewhere, the link between the written and oral cultures has always been fluid in the Hindu tradition – the one impacting on the other in varying degrees.

Müller is the first European to edit and bring out the six-volume edition of the *Rig Veda*, together with the fourteenth-century commentary of Sayana. Both nineteenth century European scholarship and traditional Hindu scholarship have tended to rely heavily on the ritualistic interpretation of the Veda given by Sayana, thereby overlooking the inner symbolic import of the Veda (Aurobindo 1984:17–18). The main drawback of Sayana's ritualistic interpretation, according to Sri Aurobindo, is that it "seeks continually to force the sense of the Veda into that narrow mould", thus obscuring the inner significance implicit in the hymns and rendering it in its minimalist sense (Aurobindo 1971:18). He draws attention to how European scholars like Müller have made skilful use of traditional aspects of Sayana's commentary by subjecting the commentary to a comparative approach based on nineteenth-century Western notions of philology, mythology, history, and myth, thus constructing an elaborate body of Vedic mythology, history and culture (Aurobindo 1971:23). Müller sees the Veda as a repository of natural revelation, and the Vedic deities as no more than mere personifications of the natural phenomena rather than as potent symbols or expressions of the One. In trying to fix the original meaning of the Veda, Europeans scholars like Müller have thus rendered the meaning of the Veda in its minimalist sense.

Three, in his approach to the Veda, Müller employs both the rhetoric of affirmation and of negation at one and the same time. He acknowledges that the Veda contains noble thoughts, but much in them appears to his Protestant perspective as "childish in the extreme, tedious low, common place" (Müller 1868:27) . He remarks that there is "much that is elevated and elevating, and much that is beautiful and sublime "; but at the same time there is much in them that is immature and repugnant that it can be of little interest to anyone except a historian (Müller 1902b:11). For Müller, even from an aesthetic point of view the Veda has nothing much to offer. He emphasizes that "there is little that is beautiful, in our sense of the word, to be found in the hymns of the Rig-veda..." (Müller 1875:369). Nevertheless, the hymns are seen as valuable, for "hidden in this rubbish there are precious stones" (Müller 1868:27) . Müller reckons that, in spite of the Upanishads containing some marks of "poetical eloquence" and philosophical worth, they are at the same time "utterly meaningless and irrational" and "utter rubbish." He goes on to say that "there will always remain in the Upanishads a vast amount of what we can only call meaningless jargon" (Müller 1884:xix–xx). In the same breath Müller praises the Bible as being far ahead of other sacred books (Müller 1884:xx).

Four, for Müller the Veda can offer only a fragile and insecure monotheism. As with other European scholars, Müller uses biblical monotheism as the yardstick to examine the Rig-Vedic affirmation of multiplicity of gods. Müller is struck by the fact that the *Rig Veda* affirms many gods whilst at the same time each god is

given supreme importance in their respective hymns and becomes the sole object of devotion at given time while at another time another god is given similar attention. Neither the multiplicity of gods nor the affirmation of a particular god at a particular time diminishes the unique importance of other gods, even if the same attributes are ascribed to them. Müller finds such an understanding and treatment cumbersome, and characterises it as “chaotic theogony” (1892:162). That is to say, the gods, in Müller’s view, are not organized in any systematic manner but seemed to emerge with ease and occupy a supreme position. He coins two terms to describe what he considers the true nature of vedic religion: *Henotheism*, which is “the worship of single gods,” and *Kathenothesim* which is “the worship of one god after another.” He thus distinguishes it from Greek and Roman polytheism, and from Semitic monotheism. Preferring the term *Henotheism*, Müller draws a distinction between Semitic and Vedic monotheism: “This shorter name of *Henotheism* has found more general acceptance, as conveying more definitely the opposition between *Monotheism*, the worship of one only God, and *Henotheism*, the worship of single gods…” (Müller 1892:147). Müller goes to great lengths to highlight this distinction in order to show that if at all there is any form of monotheism in the Veda, it is rather fragile and “defenceless,” degenerating into polytheism. In his letter to the Duke of Argyll, Müller speaks of vedic religion being closer to untainted monotheism – a monotheism that is still in its infant state (Müller 1902a:480). In brief, Müller locates in the Veda a “primitive monotheism” but not a distorted version of biblical monotheism, as Jones does. In Müller’s view, the Vedic hymns, as we have seen, embody thoughts which are still in their infancy. In other words, the Veda in itself does not offer any room for the development of ideas for its true worth lies in its being the first sigh of a new born child. Therefore one should not look for a well-developed monotheistic conception of God in the Veda. To put it another way, one should not even try to look for anything other than natural revelation in the Veda (Müller 1901:248).

Five, Müller privileges the Veda, thus disregarding other textual and oral forms of knowledge. He undermines any Sanskrit text that is not part of the *sruti* tradition. In one of his 1882 lectures to British candidates for the Civil Service, Müller refers to the *Gita* as “a rather popular and exoteric exposition of Vedantic doctrines” (Müller 1892:252). While William Jones rated the *Bhagavadgita* highly, Müller lamented that a text of little importance had come to occupy an enormous significance in the West. In his reckoning, “It was a real misfortune that Sanskrit literature became first known to the learned public in Europe through specimens belonging to the second…period” (Müller 1892:90). The *Gita*, in his view, was a product of degenerate period whereas the Veda was a product of an uncorrupt period. “The only original, the only important period of Sanskrit literature,” he remarks, “ which deserves to become the subject of earnest study…is that period which preceded the rise of Buddhism…” (Müller 1878:145). He regards Sanskrit works such as *Sakuntala* as no more than mere “literary curiosities,” undertaken by men like William Jones, and which can “never become the object of a life-study” (Müller 1878:142). Although the Veda is seen as the ultimate source of authority and has been drawn upon by various schools of Hindu philosophy and religious groups,

its pre-eminent role has not been unanimously accepted by all Hindus, especially by *bhakti* sects. For Müller, only the Sanskrit Veda matters. Orientalists, like Müller, who are so obsessed with the Sanskrit language, fail to note that there is another Indian language, Tamil, which is essentially as old as Sanskrit and has its own sacred text. What is often not recognized is that the term Veda is also extended to the entire collection of Tamil Srivaisnava devotional poems of *Alvars* (poet-saints), called *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*.[8] The point is that Divine revelation is not confined to the Vedic seers but is also seen as manifesting itself through the twelve *alvars*. Therefore Tamil devotional literature is regarded as the "Tamil Veda". The term is also applied to Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli* (meaning "word of sacred mouth") which is a significant part of *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. The designation, "Tamil Veda", is particularly significant given that the term Veda was used solely with reference to revelation through the medium of the Sanskrit language. It was in the tenth century C.E. that a vernacular language for the first time became the medium of revelation. Furthermore, the notion of the Tamil Veda did not conflict in any way with the Sanskrit Veda or result in the former being treated as inferior. As Narayanan and Carman point out: "For the first time in Hindu consciousness, hymns in a language other than Sanskrit were considered to be revealed. The claim was also unique in that none of the teachers in the Srivaisnava community felt that they were rebelling against the Sanskrit tradition; nor did they hold either Veda to be inferior to the other" but saw the two traditions in complementary terms – as a "confluence of two rivers" (Carman and Narayanan 1989:4). In fact, some of the secondary texts such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavadgita* have been elevated to the status of *sruti*. The epic, the *Mahabharata*, is designated "the fifth Veda".

The aim of this chapter is not to discredit the erudite scholarship of Müller but to bring to the fore the underlying presuppositions governing his hermeneutical exercise. In other words, it demonstrates how Müller exploits the material in order to suit his own theological conclusions. He constructs a textualized Hinduism which is informed by nineteenth-century notions of evolution, historicism, and comparative philology. He forges a non-ecclesiastical Protestant form of Hinduism which will eventually find fulfilment in Christianity. In other words, Müller fashions a Hinduism that suits his own hermeneutical assumptions – a Hinduism that has much to do with his own nostalgia for an uncontaminated European past. What he offers is a Veda that is still locked in its infancy, needing the help of the evolved European culture. The Veda has glimpses of truth but these are those of a child and should be treated as such (although later in his life he came to regard the Vedanta highly).

Notes

[1] There are a number of volumes which deal with the subject. For a convenient entry into the origin, background, key practitioners, and debates from within and outside the field, see Ashcroft et al. 1989, Gandhi 1998, McLeod 2000, and Quayson 2000. For clarification of terms, see Ashcroft et al 1998. For application of the theory for specific religions traditions, see King 1999 for Hinduism and Majid 2000 for Islam.

[2] This a slightly revised version of the paper presented at the AAR Meeting in Atlanta, 2003. For a more extended account of this subject matter, see Chapter 2 in my book *Imagining Hinduism: A Postcolonial Perspective* (2003) London: Routledge.
[3] Warren Hastings was highly impressed on reading Charles Wilkins's draft translation of the *Bhagavadgita* and made a deliberate attempt to publicize it in Britain. He hoped that by showing that Indians were not a savage race but had a sublime text such as the *Gita*, he could win the support of the British public for an oriental mode of government (Marshall 1970:180).
[4] See Van der Veer 2001:111.
[5] Unlike Darwin, Müller does not see human evolution as beginning with the beast, but with the child. In his letter to the Duke of Argyll dated 22 February 1880, Müller states that he holds "that Man was evolved, not however, from a beast, but from a child, which actually represents a stage much lower than the highest beast, but potentially a stage out of the reach of any beast" (Müller 1902b:81).
[6] Müller states in his letter to the Duke of Argyll: "that if the religion of India could be brought back to that simple form which it exhibits in the *Veda*, a great reform would be achieved' but this alone will not suffice. In his view the Veda lacks "the high and pure and almost Christian morality of the Buddha" but the redeeming fact is that "as far as the popular conceptions of the deity are concerned, the Vedic religion, though childish and crude, is free from all that is so hideous in the later Hindu Pantheon" (Müller 1902a:362). Similarly in his letter to Professor Deussen of Kiel, Müller speaks of making *Vedanta* intelligible both to Europeans and Indians (Müller 1902b:399).
[7] Although Müller regards the Veda as having nothing to do with modernity, when the modern form of communication, the microphone, was invented, he used the medium, and recited the oldest Sanskrit hymn, the *Rig-Veda*, in order to sanctify and give the Veda a ritual welcome (Müller 1902b: 48–49).
[8] See Sundaram 1996.

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Being and Text: Dialogic Fecundation of Western Hermeneutics and Hindu Mīmāṃsā in the Critical Era

Purushottama Bilimoria

In the beginning was the word (śabda)
The word was with Meaning (artha)
The word was Meaning (śabdibhāvana)
And it is This that speaketh.

Prelogue

> **Hermes**, [Gr.] *Myth*. A deity, the son of Zeus and Maia, the messenger of the Greek gods, the good of science, commerce, eloquence, and many of the arts of life; commonly figured as a youth, with the *conduceus*, or rod, *petasus* or brimmed hat, and *talaria* or winged shoes. From which comes *hermeneuein* [Latin, *hermeneuticus*; German, *Hermeneutik*] "to make something clear, to announce or to unveil a message"[1] – in short, to *interpret*. Hermeneutics, then, first and foremost is about *Meaning;* and its presupposition is language or Speech. (What would the Sanskrit equivalent of the toppied-Kumārasvāmin of Indra, *Vāc*, and Māyā, with *daṇḍa* and uddatichappel, imaginary look like?)

The discourse of modern hermeneutics has a certain enigma surrounding it. Perhaps we have not known anything like this in Indian intellectual circles; or perhaps we have, but the West or the moderns have not been made aware of this *lebenswelt*. However my task as always is rather more modest. This essay aims to engrave a critique from a contemporary South Asian *perspectivism* on the margins of the grand and voluminous debate in Western scholarship on the 'science' of hermeneutics – the empathic art of understanding the speech or voice or text of another. First up, I shall trace the Western development of this programmatic of interpretation and its presuppositions about the nature and relation of text and its meaning, from Spinoza, Schleiermacher, through to postmodern commentators, especially Dilthey, Ricoeur, Foucault, Heidegger and Derrida – albeit in very brief summaries.

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Part I: Introduction

While the virtual explosion of theories of textual meaning and semiological processes ensuing from this erstwhile movement has had considerable impact in areas such as the arts, postmodernist readings, feminist studies, psychoanalysis, and ecology, the possibility however of serious and productive dialogic fecundation from a cross-cultural, and postcolonial, perspective has all but remained a distant echo. In order to rectify this lag and suggest some direction of creative exploration in this fertile area, I turn to the much older tradition of hermeneutics, from within the Brāhmaṇic-Hindu (*āstika*) tradition, namely of the Mīmāṃsā. The Mīmāṃsā is one among the six or so earlier and leading schools of Indian thought within the so-called Orthodox or *āstika* tradition. This 'most archaic of the orthodoxies of India' – in the words of Ninian Smart[2] – is grounded in the inviolable authority of the Vedas over any personal author-ity, divine or human. While later Brāhmaṇical schools closer to the period of distinctly Hindu thought (with the emergence of the historic schism with Buddhism especially, following closely the Jaina in the subterranean Śramaṇic or ascetic belt) came to espouse believe in a supremely transcendent deity (whether in some polytheistic, trinitarian or unitarian pantheon), the Mīmāṃsā never did condescend to a faith-based theology over and above (or against) one rooted in reasoning – albeit ritual thinking – jurisprudence, reflection, linguistic analysis, and argumentative logic (*nyāya*). Hence, the importance of the Mīmāṃsā to the development of hermeneutical thought in India – even pre-dating Buddhist hermeneutics – and for its a/theological predilections in which it rivals the best of a/theistic dispositions within the Śramaṇic lineage and elsewhere. It is then better described as *kāstika*, not the negation as such but a disputer of the presuppositions of what came to be and continues to hound Indian thought and culture as the *āstika* orthodoxology.

With that brief beginning, I shall next illustrate some applications and utilization of these methods of understanding in the broader textual interpretive enterprise, particularly in respect of moral-legal treatises. Thus, for example, it is not widely recognized that a practice of reading the intricacies of ritual texts, discerning meaning hidden behind impersonal texts, came to have far-reaching ramifications in the social, legal, and political discourses, and was also relied upon by the courts in British India to clarify issues while reframing the Personal Laws of Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and tribal people vis-à-vis Common Law that the colonial masters attempted to impose upon the religiously and legally diverse cultures.

Finally, I demonstrate how there is a rich area of dialogic or interactive hermeneutical task that can and is in some ways already being pursued in the areas of Hindu feminist and postcolonial critiques, where the voices of the subaltern are sought to be retrieved and a third space made available for marginalized groups, the 'other', the outcastes, and those colonized subjects in various countries throughout the world. The argument of the new '*undā*-do*god*' (deeply divining) hermeneutics is that the history of religions might be more authentic and closer to the truth were its voices to emerge, as it were, 'from below' rather than from the pens of the privileged, the elite, the experts, and bow-tied academic researchers who have some

vested interest (by dint of yet another small-time *tradition*) in perpetuating certain myths – 'paradigm' – of the dominant cultural force in a society or tradition [read, modernity] at large. To reign in this critique it is important to understand postmodernism/postcolonialism and deconstruction more deeply than is often the case. New theories *are* being developed in certain areas of South Asian scholarship.

Last but not least – this is something closer to my own mind – cross-cultural philosophers of religion have claimed that the Western invention of the subdiscipline or discourse of philosophy of religion, where too interpretation has a long career, with its expectations of a solid, irrefutable and logically profound 'reading' of the Transcendent, has triggered much unnecessary anguish, mimicry, and irreparable damage among non-Western, non-Christian peoples. When directed at the 'other' this trenchant discourse has in part also helped erode local traditions, folk understandings, indigenous hermeneutics, law and social wisdom developed over many centuries in non-Western religious cultures by which they have sustained themselves.[3] The way out is not more 'wars', mutual lamp-blasting, but more, to draw on a popular vernacular allusion, *mākhanchān* (*ghee-churning* – note indeed the role of ghee in modern *yajña* or sacrificial rites, as the messaging *conduceus* between Agni [fire-form] and the etheric-mantric effects called *devas*); that is, dialogic fecundation, in some ways even more important than the production of *texts*. This is a consequence of the kind of theoretical direction I hope to see developed more widely, or cross-culturally.

Spinoza

I begin in Europe circa seventeenth century with Benedict Baruch Spinoza (1634–1677), whose work emerged during the religious revival in the times known as the Reformation. Spinoza wanted sacred Scriptures demystified, whose access up until this time was vested in the 'special powers' of the church.[4] The challenge was to disenfranchise the priestly and rabbinical castes from any extra-revelatory role in the understanding of scriptures. He began by questioning the prevailing notions of interpretation and how exactly meaning was to be located. As well as the subjective sovereign freedom of the individual to interpret the Bible for the development of one's inner religious piety, Spinoza urged that no scriptural statement can be accepted as authoritative until it is 'perceived very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history'.[5] By 'history' he meant the 'common conversational usage of the day', the times and environment an author lived in, the circumstances and motivations that propelled the utterances, and the nuances underpinning the words, phrases, grammatical structures, symbol and imagery utilized, including the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the works, and how the conventions may change from one time to another. All such considerations were thematized by him against possible fossilization and hardening of the text. Spinoza was essentially proposing that we seek an understanding of the *meaning* of texts, within a semi-naturalized and relativized framework, with an openness nevertheless to universals, significantly of a moral kind, rather than of some prophetic anticipations. To be sure, Spinoza is not

valorizing history qua *history*; rather, he sees history as a cultural accretion that conceals true understanding of scripture. The next step was the recognition of how current dynamics may lead to certain issues or interpretation gaining prominence; that is, just as the author's time affects the writing, the present affects its interpretation. (We know that, for example, in respect of the shifts in understanding of the doctrine of 'just war', or of 'holy war'.) This led in time to an unveiling of the plethora of semantic processes that go into the creation of meaning and understanding, such as looking at the scriptures in their totality rather than focusing narrowly over the meaning of a part or parts. All this may appear commonplace to us as inheritors of a rich legacy of multi-valenced readings, but in Spinoza's own time this was truly 'big news', a novel idea, even if somewhat heretical and radical; but for Spinoza's sharp lens-grinding (which he did for a living), we would be poorer for it.

Schleiermacher

About a century later came Schleiermacher, who is attributed with developing the 'science' of hermeneutics – thought of as 'a profound radicalization of the understanding of texts' or 'the art of rightly understanding the speech, chiefly in written form, of another'. Schleiermacher hoped to provide general principles of hermeneutics that would extend beyond Biblical exegesis to other fields of interpretation, such as juridical, philological, historical.[6] 'Meaning' in this mode of analysis does not feature as an '*over*-standing' category, i.e. as some kind of transcendence or overarching sentiment, much less a criterion, in terms of which the truth of the proposition is to be flashed out and determined: that is why it is called '*under*-standing': meaning or signification underpins and fertilizes *knowing* in some deep or subjectively nuanced sense, mood, response and '-prehension'. The latter idea is connected to *Verstehen* (a term associated with the more subjective capacity for linguistic mastery – making of speech in the reverse and influencing its development) – this is 'understanding' proper.[7] The matrix of *Verstehen* is a whole made up of numerous parts, in particular, the personal context and the author's mental life, i.e. the experience, perspective, knowledge-base and semantics of the speech (discourse) community. To this exercise of judgment (in the Kantian frame) is added the Romantics idea of aesthetic organic unity with an infinite number of possible appreciation and therefore interpretation. The production, reading and interpretation of text has *per force* a parallel process. The author's idiosyncratic creative contribution to the text as a work of art requires an insight into the external and internal history.[8]

It follows that authorial intention was much emphasized in Schleiemacher's hermeneutics, but at a more phenomenological and subjective level, cashed out as irrational motivations and instinctual drives reflecting different historical, cultural and class interests. Alongside common usage of the times, that Spinoza had also emphasized, this constitutes the second rule of interpretation. Furthermore, the whole can only be understood in terms of its parts; however, the part cannot be understood independent of the whole. An engagement in a continuing reciprocity of the whole and its parts is the third rule he offers. With the increase of our knowledge,

we are in a much better position to read and understand a text. Nevertheless, there will always be a perspectival remainder, or a lag, a lack, an absence and hiatus, when one concept or idea (i.e. text) is communicated from one individual in a given cultural location to another. He recognized that the individual/group perceptions are tied to individual/group language or speech, and function according to similar patterns (something Wittgenstein via Kierkegaard came to call 'language game'). Hence discussion becomes important, as one negotiates one's own views and those of other participants through articulation of individual understandings on a given topic. Understanding is a constant process of negotiation between disparate loci. This interdependence of understanding and history was a moot point in Dilthey's symbolic naming of such a process – viz. in 'the hermeneutical circle' (before Heidegger rendered it a more metaphysical twist, as we shall note a little later in the essay.).

Dilthey

Wilhelm Dilthey, the biographer of Schleiermacher, wanted to extend hermeneutics to the understanding of all kinds of human behaviour and productions. That however entailed reorienting hermeneutics toward the more solid foundations of *Gesiteswissenschaften* or the 'human sciences'.[9] This would help to resist 'romantic caprice and skeptical subjectivity' and enhance the objective certainty of historical knowledge:[10] *historical* understanding is the true value of this knowledge.[11] For Dilthey history *as a process* is what is central to understanding, especially shared understanding. Though necessary, it is never sufficient to focus on the historical context much less on the psychology of the author, or their personality, unconscious stirrings and so on. It is rather the inter-looping of that phenomenology of the author with the historical phenomenology of 'others' and their realities that goes toward creating an entire linguistic and cognitive system – into which the next reader is irredeemably born and has to find her own under-*standing*. Understanding therefore embraces a reconstructed history, including social customs, cultural and political institutions, whose residues are traced in the written form.[12] We understand in terms of an historically-shaped language that has already shaped understanding even before discourse occurs – for it is within the public and institutional space of discourse that understanding is measured. But this by no means is a 'new' or better, or more advanced or progressive and thereby authentic/vindicated understanding; rather, it is just another in the process of cumulative meanings got through the exchange of ideas, words, symbols in a constant renegotiation and layering of these and such meanings. Often this process actually clouds as much the truth as it reveals it. Much understanding appears to be the accumulation of manipulated symbols.[13]

Of course, Dilthey sought to develop rather than submerge Scheliemacher's insights into a methodological tool for deeper understanding of history and various disciplines in which understanding was centrally important, by acknowledging the assumptions and unspoken axioms on which the disciplines are structured. Histories (past and lived or presently vanishing) as human processes and artifacts are brutish,

and nasty and corrupting, perhaps even polymorphemely perverse; however, the discipline of history through the hermeneutic application and the detached gaze of theory could uncover hidden assumptions and meanings that the social-historical-cultural processes had created or helped repress. And this applies to patterns of culture beyond or past history as well. Yet, at once, Dilthey disavowed the possibility of a foundational method, and in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*,[14] argued that all human sciences are interdependent and interpretive. Thus, where the natural sciences had as their goal, increasingly wider generalizations, according to him, the additional aim of the human sciences was to understand the social and the individual as well as their relationship. The flaw here is that there is no true intersubjectivity involved; the 'Other' as Gadamer pointed out, exists for the sole purpose of being the delineating limit for the subject. This – it is hardly necessary to point out – is highly relevant in cross-cultural philosophical and religious studies.

Michel Foucault later called such hidden productions of suppressed temporal memories of relationships and subjectivities 'epistemes' which he compared to the layered sedimentations of the earth's crusts investigated in archaeology. One implication of this approach developed further by structuralists and deconstructionists was that the intentions of the speaker or the author writing a text is almost immaterial, or should not form part of the interpretative cohesion, given that the *Verstehen* encompasses a far wider reach and is of much deeper significance than the individual author's speech may suggest. The analogy, more significantly, here is to the deep structure of language and the linguistic rules we unconsciously rely upon when speaking; linguists are still struggling to understand in its entirety how the linguistic process is accomplished in our splendid and diverse speech capacities. It is as though *language* as a 'discourse' (i.e. an activity in the broader sense of cultural formulations, suppressed intentionalities, historical and discursive formations and so on) speaks or manifests through individual human beings. In that regard 'texts' are 'authorless', and we need not be concerned about authorial intentions when seeking to understand a range of texts, no more than judges worry unduly about the intent of the authors when interpreting the point of law or a constitutional article on a certain issue in their jurisdiction.[15] The separation ultimately between the text and the author is captured in the famed adage coined by Barthes, to whit, 'Death of the Author', playing on the Nietzschean knell of the 'Death of God'.

Post-Dilthey

In the post-Diltheyian project, hermeneutic analysis is taken as the 'language' (*meta-écrit*) of languages (*discours*); this becomes the goal of various other social [or human] sciences, into which philology, psychoanalysis and religious studies, not to speak of the amorphous 'area studies', have struggled to find firm membership and recognition.

However, the deep suspicions of the failure of the interpretive tasks that had in part triggered Dilthey to go in the direction with the tight disciplinary or hermetic

boundaries opposite to Nietzsche's and Kiekegaard's, never quite lost its appeal and impact among the existentialist pedigree, particularly in Rudolph Bultmann and Martin Heidegger respectively. Bultmann reiterated that '... every interpreter brings with him certain conceptions, perhaps idealistic or psychological, as presuppositions of his exegesis, in most cases, unconsciously'[16] and for that reason he suggested a filtering of the text to uncover what was meaningful and what was not, in a process referred to as 'demythologising' and 'reduction criticism' – which is an idea popularized by Karl Barth[17] – in an attempt to rescue hermeneutics from the attack by Nietzsche who had altogether questioned the role of interpretation claiming that it was an insertion of meaning, not a *discovery* as such, and often effected with the purpose of affirming the interpreter's own assumptions, ideological leanings, and perspectival limits.[18] Hence Nietzsche's perspectivism questioned both the privileged epistemic status of the sciences alongside logic and moral theory, for that matter, any 'method' for understanding the world. Nietzsche pointed out that societies of modern times were decadent, falling apart, and that their moral authority no longer bound the creative individual.[19]

Heidegger's Hammer

Martin Heidegger, taking his cynical cue from Nietzsche and the methodological thrust of Dilthey's, was more trenchant; he was disenchanted with classical hermeneutics, believing it could not solve the problem of its own presupposition. He questioned the suggestion that the *true* meaning is believed to be located in the texts or in the historical author's intentions *independently* of the reader's or interpreter's encounter with the texts; even more significantly, away from the inner life and situatedness of the interpreter herself. The presupposition being pointed to amounts to saying that a prior understanding would always ground interpretation which is itself always constituted by fore-structures, and which obstructs our understanding. Our understanding also changes with transformations in our knowledge and in our Be-ing (*Dasein*), and therefore meanings would always change in accordance with 'our line of vision'.[20]

Heidegger, in effect, throws a hammer into the work of classical (nineteenth century) hermeneutics that began with Schleiermacher's intervention and culminated in Dilthey's historicization of the hermeneutical process, changing the course of 'the science of interpretation' forever. Heidegger's main agenda was to direct the hermeneutic analysis toward the philosophical question of Being, rather than confine it to objective knowledge in the *Geisteswissenschaften*.[21] He emphasized instead the disclosure of the ontological conditions underlying such knowledge in his attempt to develop a fundamental ontology of human existence or *Dasein* (literally 'there-being' in temporality).[22] The hermeneutic of Dasein opens up 'an analytic of *existence*, or the meaning of Being. 'In all explanation one uncovers understandingly that which one cannot understand;...all explanation is rooted in *Dasein's* primary understanding'.[23] While relying on Husserl's more abstract phenomenological method, Heidegger reconstructed it to fit his own purposes of

methodically uncovering the concealed structures of human existence in the world.[24] This changed hermeneutics from a theory of interpretation (scriptural, authorial, linguistic, cognitive) to a theory of ontological understanding: the condition of our being, and hence grounding it in a deeper metaphysic, but not of an absolutist kind. The phenomenology of 'being-there' signifies the business of interpretation; interpretation has no business outside of this project of existential phenomenology.[25]

So what Heidegger brings to hermeneutics is the thesis that 'interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former'.[26] Understanding is influenced by our own thrownness in historical (temporal) existence, what Heidegger calls 'being-in-the-world'. The problem is explained in the following way. A prior understanding always grounds interpretation; but the understanding itself is constituted by fore-structures.[27] 'The entity which is held in our fore-having – for instance, the hammer – is proximally ready-to-hand as equipment.' Thus understanding already presupposes in its fore-structures what interpretation is to provide. One has to acknowledge the grip of this circle while also working through to unconceal or disclose the unapparent fore-structures, the presuppositions and so on, in the genuine apprehension of *Dasein*'s encounter with Being and its own trajectory. The three fore-structures of understanding are named as, (1) the fore-having – something we have in advance, that which we bring to each interpretive act; (2) fore-sight – something we see in advance, the point of view or perspective we bring to the interpretive act, and (3) fore-conception – something we grasp in advance, the conceptual reservoir that we have, and bring to the interpretive act.[28]

A Heideggerian example would be in the reading, say, of Rilke: fore-having would be the language-base one brings to the work; fore-sight would include the literary genre, political orientation; and fore-conception might be the familiarity with the writer and his other works. But note that the obvious undiscussed assumptions of the interpreter are taken for granted with the interpretation – they have already been presented with the fore-structures of understanding. Thus, interpretation is essentially founded on these three 'fore'-runners, so to speak.[29] Like the chain of being, interpretation is a ceaseless interplay of fore-structures articulating the meaning and constituting the text.

This, then, is Heidegger's basic argument: the preconditions of our understanding already stand presupposed elsewhere, largely in the fore-structures of human speech in interaction with the ready-at-hand (othering) world. But when we are given a piece of interpretation, or, *havan*-help, 'explanation' in human sciences, we never stop to consider the fore-structures that made this possible: we are rather more fascinated by considerations of the con-text, the mental life, and authorial intent, the historical conditions, class interests, and instinctual drives, dirty dreams, etc., of the author in question (which is the classical hermeneutic modality). We do not ask: what does the proffered reading (*interpretation*) tell us about our own existential condition (*self/other understanding*)?

It is arguably the case that cultural and historical artifacts and their transmissions over time (or travel over space) are also imbued with pre-conceptions, prejudices, pre-judgment, occlusions and even errors of judgment within them. Now if our 'readings' or expectations of meaning are conducted against this horizon or

background of 'language' then our interpretations cannot be said to be free of those very prejudices, presuppositions and biases, wittingly or unwittingly, as is too often presupposed in the hermeneutical enterprise. The interpreter as the interlocutor is another moment in the tradition (or seated in another tradition) as is the object she/he is attempting to interpret and understand (and all the more confounding if the object is the 'subject' or self of the interpreter, or the Self writ large as in Hegel's idea of Spirit as Absolute Subject, or Brahman of the Upaniṣads). Language, text, linguistic structure, interpretation and understanding are inextricably intertwined; language being 'the abode of Being', all understand conducted by and through language per force entails an interpretation of the topoi of being, *as being*, wherever it is, just there, or if no where in particular. All understanding (and translation) is interpretation and all translation is also interpretation. Further, all interpretation is embedded in language which itself, historically and culturally speaking, is not free from certain prejudices and presuppositions. Can another nail dislodge/destruct a bent nail stuck on the raw piece of hardwood? The circularity of the interpretive task is wrenched by the Heideggerian hammer; and this leads to *Destruktion* or deconstruction, as it came to be known, not though another reconstructed texture. As to the precise role or genealogy of '*Destruktion*' in the history of ontology (often misunderstood as indicative of a nihilistic urge or simple destruction), Heidegger gives this account:

> We understand this task [of loosening the hardened tradition and of dissolving its obscurities in order to make the question transparent in its own history] as that of the *destruction* of the traditional standing (*Bestand*) of ancient ontology, a destruction which is carried out *under the guidance of the question of being* and which works toward the original experiences in which the first and thenceforth the leading definitions or determinations of being were achieved.[30]

So 'Destruction' is aimed at getting behind the presuppositions of a tradition (its history of ontology) and unearthing or unmasking the hidden, the unspoken, the *unthought*, (its history of metaphysics), as well as gaining an inkling of the future goals, trajectory of hopes or aspirations of the culture (religion, the national project), albeit not in the isolation of a scholar's detached haveli but in a 3-way dialogue with the tradition. This may, as indeed, it appeared to, lead to a the 'end of nothingness', the closure of all metaphysics. As J L Mehta remarks, 'Heidegger's philosophy thus represents the historic moment of the self-abrogation, the 'reversal', of the metaphysical tradition and is itself conditioned by this tradition'.[31] Heidegger has already stood the West on its head, and left only trace-like embers enough to undermine any confidence in the possibility of the West ever understanding itself let alone the distant other. Have we yet reached – or be allowed by the apologists to reach – that Archimedean point or the goddessly aperture represented by the *śikhara* atop the temple dome, in our own, i.e. Indic, hermeneutical forays?

Heidegger is also of course fascinated, indeed overwhelmed, by the 'mystery of language', for it is indeed that language speaks of itself, by itself in texts, perhaps through tradition, but in all ways prior to individual human birth in the world: we are each born into utterability *templum or* 'house of being'. There is no other, besides, beneath, or beyond. Too late for the gods, too early for God; and eternity too is running out of time (for might only be temporality). His model for understanding

the depth of language becomes a dialogue with language itself, as though it were a transcendentalised 'other' – another way of being – with which one is inexorably confronted and in which or with which one beholds the images or reflections of one's own being moving in time. Indeed, meaning is elicited not from a correspondence theory of truth but from but the opening up of the world to *Dasein*, beyond the mediation of conceptual, prepositional, or mental constructions/obstructions. Thus Heidegger adds:[32]

> Names, words in their broadest sense, have no a priori fixed measure of their significant content. Names, or again their meanings, change with transformation in our knowledge of things, and the meanings of names and words always change according to the predominance of a specific line of vision toward the thing... All significations, including those that are apparently mere verbal meanings, arise from reference to things [experienced].

Thus, in his idiosyncratic work, *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger himself attempts to engage with speakers of other languages, notably Japanese and Chinese scholars, to figure out what language means to each such group, hoping that language would 'unconceal' its truth (*aletheia*) in such a meaningful encounter. And he urged that future research would need to take seriously philosophical investigations of and dialogue with Eastern-Asian traditions. In other words, Heidegger had already anticipated what some call 'cross-cultural hermeneutics', which his ardent pupils and commentators, such as Gadamer and J L Mehta have taken us further along the path on. Foucault with Habermas from the Frankfurt 'Critical Theory' School extended the Heideggerian worry in one direction, and Gadamer in another; with interlocutors such as Derrida and Ricoeur coming in between.

Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics

J G Arapura has continued the Heideggerian-Mehta transcendentalization of hermeneutics qualified by the radical 'concrescence' or being's this-worldly temporality, with particular reference what he calls 'modified Vedāntism'.[33] Heidegger to him is the 'supreme hermeneutist of our time',[34] and he finds Heidegger's thought incomparably fecundating, not to say challenging, especially in respect of its ability to prod one to raise the question of thought, the immense possibilities of which remain untapped in the ancient Indian system.

Hermeneutics, in its classical western version as 'the science of interpretation', now deconstructed by Heidegger and reinforced by Foucault's point about the power relation that the interpretive lens bears on the textual source, cannot any longer be taken for granted as a useful tool, no more than Orientalism, to which hermeneutics is a handmaid, in as much as the appropriation of expertise on non-Western traditions by Western scholars entails a consequent disempowerment of their non-Western colleagues. The privileging intransigency helps simply to import hermeneutical and exegetical methods to the study of non-Western texts that succeed in distorting or simply missing the significance of those texts or the meaningfulness of the claims they make and arguments they proffer in their home cultures.[35] For

particularly in the cross-cultural context, the interpretive lens privileged is a distinctively Western lens, taking for granted a horizon of interpretation which itself should now be a matter for contention in reading and interpreting multiple traditions. The charge is that the Western texts, views and arguments are typically taken as the standards against which non-Western texts are read and interpreted and with respect to which are inevitably found either wanting, or, in the most generous case, found to approximate – the latter serving as the highest (and most patronizing) accolade vindicating the elite scholar's attention to a tradition beyond his or her own. Writers such as Tuck, Panikkar, Larson, Yadav among others have been pointing this out in respect largely of the enterprise of comparative philosophy and religion.[36]

Given this scenario, does post-Heideggerian model for hermeneutics serve us any better? I believe so, if only one could appreciate the onus of responsibility and the kind of calling that the ontological thrust of this radical hermeneutics places upon the scholar or reader: interpretation becomes an existential act of re-informing the interlocutor of her situatedness both inside and outside of the reading machine; the letter of the text is put through the grinding washer – indeed as Spinoza subjected the lens in his hands (both of the eyes and the artificated pieces). However, in the next move, the spirit of the *text-in-being* calls upon the interpreter to be open to the *being-in-text*, of both bathing in a textual tradition not of one's own but also washing (away) her soul-mind towards horizons (perhaps) not reached before or accessible, or commodifiable, in other ways, *on either side* (imperial, national/diasporic): one must allow the text to *speak* to her being. That is what I mean by text-in-being/being-in-text: *Being and Text*. Apart from the more nuanced post-Heideggerian hermeneutical stance – again, not in theory but rather on the precipe of one's own being-in-text – several elements or ingredients and supplements are required to make this modality significant and workable.

And here I draw from insights that have emerged both from within the Indian tradition as well as through a critique of certain Western approaches, from and for a cross-cultural perspective, moving us toward a possible fecundation. Revisioning hermeneutics can be no more a 'science' or a tightly coded methodological project than the critique or the deconstruction itself. This of course makes the so-sounding 'the other's free right to defend her tradition' in the simultaneous act of both re-reading the text and also critiquing the challenging or waiting-to-be-challenged interpretation so gratuitous; the other is burdened with at least four onerous tasks: provide a reading of her text in the language of the alien reading, or retreat into the invisible space of incommensurability; proffer an interpretation *plus* the hermeneutics thereof that would vindicate within the bounds of *disciplinary hermetic* her own sustained re-reading of the now displaced textuality (since the focus had been shifted to, say, the Buddha's tooth or socio-economic environment, not the originary text as such, and so not the text-in-being reading); provide an unassailable critique of the hermeneutics taken for granted in the privileged, ink-dried sole copy-righted, trans-pretation; and suppress the imaginary and being-in-text that has been her soul rite. The calling however is not speciously onerous and it can cut both ways: that

is to say, a not dissimilar expectation may be forthcoming once a facile defensive onslaught has been launched by the marked, grieved, other, often to exacerbate the issue rather than to clarify or advance it with empathic reciprocity.

Part II: Methoding Out the Truth: Philosophical Hermeneutics in the Wilds

> *There must be some way outa here, said the joker to the thief... there is too much confusion, I can get no relief... and do not talk falsely now...* (Hendrix)

Faced with the formidable Nietzschean-Heideggerian gloom, many-a-would-be 'hermenoetikaras' have turned to Hans-Georg Gadamer with his more sober and humbler rescue package of the anticipatory character of understanding and prejudice, authority and *traditione*, which he articulates in his *Truth and Method* (1975 trans. hereafter *TM*). This is what he suggests: Given that the elements that comprise the fundamental structures of our linguistic understanding are not entirely independent of the 'text' we are attempting to understand, and being historically and culturally constituted, they are further not free from certain presuppositions and prejudices (Heidegger's *fore-structures, pre-understanding*). How then can we claim to arrive at a neutral, 'Archimedean point', from which to proffer *the objective reading of the text qua text?* Either we say that everything is a 'text', including our own modes of understanding and the disciplines and methods of inquiry we bring to bear on our subject-matter (the texts), and therefore themselves stand in need of interpretation or 'de-construction', or that the concept of the text has to be extended in a way that does not leave out all the many modalities, influences, myths, cultural, historical and rhetorical tropes or expedient devices and all manner of 'constructs', patriarchal overlays, etc., that might have gone into informing the deeper, unconscious, structure or background in the very formation of the 'discourse'.

The give and take of understanding of a text occurs in the medium of language; but the medium of language is not so different from the matrix of conversation in which the speakers, if they do not share the same language-game, will find it difficult to follow and understand each other. And no one takes everything someone else says in a dialogue as unquestionable and absolute truth. Often the authenticity or otherwise of the speaker is established only after the dialogue has proceeded some way and one has had a moment or two to reflect on the testimony being presented in the course of the conversation. From such a stance, it becomes possible to cultivate reflection, detachment from the texts and the tradition as well. This insight has immense ramifications for inter-textual and intra-tradition understanding. Tradition in this way is both de-mystified and understood as a 'historical' process yet to be fully realized, and its hold therefore on authority, or claim to be grounded in '*logos*' (the absolute presence of Truth, or truth-claims about 'things-in-themselves', the End, Finality, and ultimate purpose or *Telos*) is also softened somewhat, if not bracketed out and opened up for questioning. A tradition can be menacingly

obscure and bewitching, if not also marked with exclusivity. A sense of alienation or distanciation from the tradition is then an indispensable part of reading and thinking through the textuality (texts and the making of the texts) of the tradition. There is no such thing as pre-suppositionless understanding. Our understanding is not just an act of our subjectivity, but is more like an ingression or intrusion into the process of tradition in which the past and present are continuously mediated. And this matrix, i.e. tradition or community of understanding and mutuality, is itself in constant formation and transformation: we cannot anticipate a finality to any understanding, but hold up this *telos* as an ideal, or vice versa (the latter being more a Hegelian concern).[37]

Gadamer nevertheless did not believe that such difficulties as outlined above should lead us to a hopelessly relativistic, anarchic and defeatist situation. Rather, Gadamer's own contribution was to underscore the conversation or dialogue between tradition as 'the horizon of expectation of the interpreter' and the more universal or transcendental process of reflection, but never far away from the conditions that make history. The hermeneutic dimension of meaning is bound to the unending conversation or dialogical interaction of an ideal interpretive community, an *ideal* however that can perhaps never be achieved in *praxis* but which could nevertheless anticipate the direction in which the hermeneutic act (and enactment) must move if it is not to become a meaningless montage of stereotypes and multiplilocated non-sensical conversation stoppers (or a Tower of Babel/s with mouthful of bagels). Gadamer's formulation of a 'philosophical' or 'ontological' version of hermeneutics gives ample room to concepts such as 'hermeneutical consciousness' and intentional 'meaning' which draws him closer to traditional philosophy of reflection, while in the critique of the subject – whether it be in the work of art or aesthetics, literature, history, etc. – in which he follows Heidegger's *Destruktion*, he is at one with the 'ontological turn' (as indeed Gadamer has often been charged with.[38]) While a fixed subjecthood or subject-centred meaning in the interpretive availability of the 'ear of the other' is not presupposed, nevertheless the intentionality of the other in conversation is placed in relation to the whole of our own meaning, or at least in the horizon wherein is held the meaning of the other.

What could have presented themselves as the 'bitter blockers' to adequate understanding and *Selbstverständis* (self-understanding) – namely, intentions, subject or 'auto-' reference (*mens auctoris*), and the embeddedness of a tradition of textual representation in presuppositions, pre-judgments and prejudices, are turned around by Gadamer to become the very links, devices and missing parts that actually enable and are *constitutive* of understanding. Prejudices are made transparent for what they are, and their limitations are thereby undermined. The walls of traditional framework need not keep the world closed off from hermeneutical access, in understanding and in reflection. This is what Gadamer calls 'the happening of tradition' which admits to a kind of hermeneutic self-reflection on the part of language in dialogue with (the author-ity) of tradition; and here one will notice that the horizons of language and tradition are seen to converge: the world of the reader and the world of the text merge into one another. Gadamer characterized this non-analytic

coming-together as the 'fusion of horizons'[39] and later commentators have extended the metaphor to signal the meeting of disparate cultures, trans-tradition comparisons, and even the synthesis of the arts of different cultures (as in the 'fusion' of world music).

However, Gadamer goes further and elevates tradition to a near-transcendental status for grounding our understanding, placing immense value on *ousia* or Being that as it were speaks through the audacious philosophical hermeneutics (not a historical necessity as with Hegel's parousiological *Geist*, but in various concrete historical, plural, self-and-other conscious, and non-hierarchized forms). The following very often cited passage from Gadamer's *Truth and Method* brings out this point rather tellingly:[40]

> That which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that always the authority of what has been transmitted – and not only what is clearly grounded – has power over our attitudes and behavior.... The validity of morals, for example, is based on tradition. They are freely taken over, but by no means created by a free insight or justified by themselves. That is precisely what we call tradition: the ground of their validity... tradition has a justification that is outside the arguments of reason and in large measure determines our institutions and attitudes.

Someone closer to our own field who was both instrumental in introducing Heidegger to the English-reading world through a seminal book on Heidegger's metaphysics and who interacted with Gadamer as they each developed theories of hermeneutics within the confines of their respective traditions, who we mentioned earlier, was J L Mehta; he incidentally also influenced Panikkar, William Cantwell-Smith, Halbfass and J N Mohanty's thinking as well. Mehta-ji turned Nietzsche's adage of the 'will to power' to 'The Will to Interpret' (title of a chapter in his book, *India and the West*) and through this forceful intervention promoted the idea of dialogue as an 'opening up to' global understanding – but only when it goes beyond the narrow methodology of interpreting texts because understanding and interpretation are forms of be-ing. The horizon of traditions helps us to reconstitute understanding and self-understanding of a culture in a dialectic process of author-ity (tradition) and in language. That calls for placing text and interpretation (translation included) in a larger whole (which we might call culture-textuality, '*cultexturality*' [copyright, Bilimoria] but which is one of uncertainty. The old verities disappear and institutions that were once dogmatic and socially blinding are interpreted and thereby persuaded out of their powerhold. The marked 'uncertainty' of the large traditions, applying as much to Śruti, is what post-Mehtajiyan *de-re*-construction, led Mohanty, Pandurangi, Halbfass, Pollock, Bilimoria et al. to reformulate the talk of *apauruṣeyatva* and *svatahprāmaṇyatva* (self-evidential inviolability) as a discourse about self-authentication and self-understanding of a people derived from the Grund of tradition qua *Tradition:* the transcendentalism is a non-totalizing historical, philosophical and moral rather than a metaphysical and theological, much less eschatological, postulate; and that much can and ought to be the case for the whole Sanskiritic textual authori-ity (how else should it be?). Therefore new horizons

need to be opened up and revision in the form of translation (which is always a re-translation *as* interpretation is too). It can both create bridges between disparate meaning-worlds, significations or what hermeneuts call *lebenswelt*, life-world (and sediment it as well as open it up to anticipations or memories of the future). There is room for *difference*, for Jaina *syavavāda* logic and *nyāya* perspectivism, or Nāgārjunian *catuşkoti* dialectic, for Upanişadic *neti neti* to be transmuted in social context to *nahi niti, nahi neta, ceteris paribus*, if a new avatāric order is the teleology (the discourse of the *avatāra* too being understood as the awaiting for the absent *parousia*, who perhaps never arrives for reasons of the failure of *apūrva* ever bearing undetached fruit in the subjective-objective, Puruṣa-Prakṛti-mired/wired duality, *pace*, the BhG's own ontological limits).

Here one looks not for an indefeasible position but for a critique, self-reflexively, of ritualized obstinacy, of the fetish with foundationalism and absolute power based on some unrepentant ideology. Foucault might have overextended his epistemic agnosticism when he aligned knowledge simply with the ruse of power, and overlooked the virtues of author-ity as tradition, albeit a tradition that permits hermeneutical radicalization. Gadamer is closer to that position. However, Gadamer too has not been without his critics. Habermas, for one, ravaged Gadamer's tradition-valorizing hermeneutics. Coming from the Marxian-Frankfurt school, Habermas expressed deep suspicion of Gadamer's understanding of language as an 'event in tradition', which we essentially 'suffer' as a historical condition and which we doubtless confront in lived experience. Habermas searches for a certain distanciation (critical distancing, setting reflectively aloof) from tradition and the subjectively-involved conditions ('happenings', 'events', etc.) that would make space for reflection, question dogmatic forces, and not conflate knowledge with authority. Unless there is a more universal epistemological and objective matrix from which to launch and check or scrutinize the ground-rules for this conversation or dialogue between tradition and reflection, there is no way of subduing the rule of subjectivity and preventing prejudices and pre-suppositions of a tradition from re-asserting and re-inscribing themselves. Habermas is also critical of Foucault in this context for demolishing the possibility of a knowing (enlightened) subject who does more than simply interrupts within discursive genealogies, or a subject who makes a difference with her resistance and affirmative position or agency. This is clearly an attack against the excesses of epistemic relativism.

There are two basic arguments here:

(i) In as much as the hermeneutic of tradition retains a decisive role for the subject, self-understanding and 'our own meaning' it has not freed itself from valuation of the abstract, the subjective and indeed Being.

(ii) The concept of 'tradition' leads one to ignore the dimension of *ideology* and the sway that powerful allies, forces and domineering groups within a tradition (textual, discursive, authorial, religious, cultural) have over the development of social justice and transformations anticipated in the conversations as Gadamer rightly underlines and as Foucault excavates from a dilapidated historicism.

The proximity and custom-boundedness of tradition might obscure shortcomings in one's tradition and resist criticism. As Garfield describes it aptly: 'We are simply so close to our own tradition, and so accustomed to the hermeneutic story internal to it that we do not countenance the need for or the possibility of an alternative reading of our history. This is not unique to us, of course.... The point is simply that traditions do not problematize their own self-understanding until they come into dialogue not so much with other *ideas* but with other *ways of reading*.'[41]

It follows that there is no guarantee that the supposed goodness and fair-mindedness in human beings will prevail. Tradition can easily become a ruse (hence 'tradition-in-use'), and where it is absent tradition can be re-invented (as Coomaraswamy [kumārasvāmin] did so ably in the Indian aesthetic and metaphilosophical reconstructions). The erstwhile or new understanding so derived serves as a further weapon or armory with which to continue the regime of oppression and violence (e.g. in the march of Reason in Hegel's *Geistwelt*, the emergence and justification of patriotism, nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, and fundamentalism of sorts). If we loose our distance then we weaken our ability to criticize rationally the powerful, quasi-linguistic (or discourse-saturated) forces of society that impact on our thoughts, regulate labor, dictate education, channel information, and perpetrate various forms of domination. Hence Habermas worries about Gadamer's complacent conservatism which shows in the latter's tendency to accede to the authority of tradition *even* as a rational possibility.

The critical theory of ideology views tradition with a hooded-brow of suspicion, which in Ricoeur's words amounts to, 'seeing tradition as merely the systematically distorted expression of communication under unacknowledged conditions of violence'.[42] The reference to 'suspicion' here is deliberate as it echoes Ricoeur's own characterization of the 'school of suspicion' or the doubters of the inexorably given (in history, metaphysics, and in consciousness), to which he enlists Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud respectively, who opposed or fissured interpretation as restoration of meaning with interpretation as an 'exercise of suspicion'. From this dialectic we get the famous phrase 'the hermeneutic of suspicion'[43] which can be extended to describe the Habermasian critique[44] or doubt as well.

What is then at philosophical stake in this debate would seem to boil down to one of the alternatives: hermeneutical consciousness (*pace* Gadamer) or a critical consciousness (*pace* Habermas). But Ricoeur, who intervenes in this debate – and his kind of intervention is exemplary as it is much needed in our own field too – questions this simple formulation of the alternatives, for not only is the philosophical stake too high to risk an error at this juncture, but also because it might be necessary (or our own calling in the aftermath of the disputation) to surpass the alternative, to take another turn. But Ricoeur sighs away from any planned 'annexation' or 'syncretism' in attempting to open respective spaces on both sides to 'speak' to each other, and to recognize the other's virtues and claim to universality. This bold philosophical gesture has earned Ricoeur an endearing recognition among philosophers and theologians alike.

Ricoeur therefore brings an interesting insight into this debate and helps re-orient the debate from one concerned purely with method to the question of ontology

in the concrete context of lived history. The task is not so much of 'Destruktion' as of 're-construction', or 're-structuring' out of the latent layers of recollected consciousness, reminiscence, myths, symbolic forms, narratives, with the requisite engagement of reflection and criticism. Accordingly, Ricoeur sees four schemes through which the two seemingly opposing camps (of Gadamer and Habermas) can be dialogued and brought to closer appreciation of the other's perspective.

Firstly, Ricoeur takes the idea of 'distanciation' or alienation from the tradition as an important strategy for the emancipation of the text. The suggestion is that a text is a production of a number of moves, beginning with the intention of the author, the disposition of the original auditors, the cultural environment and the socio-linguistic conditions in which it arises. Decontextualization is necessary before a recontextualization can take place. Dialogue is not a sufficient condition; discourse has to be reframed and mediated through writing which is open to anyone's reading of it.

The second move is the need for the critical attitude, in which discourse is pushed further towards objectification, 'to the point where structural analysis discloses the *depth semantics* of a text'.

Third, the hermeneutics of texts turns towards the critique of ideology, through interrogation and transgressing of the closure of the text. One no longer looks simply for the intentions of the author, but expects a world or reality (as the mode of being and power-to-be) to unfold out of it. This echoes Heidegger's trajectory of *Dasein's* own possibilities.

The fourth condition returns the element of subjectivity into interpretation, for understanding in the end is concerned with self-understanding, mediated by the 'matter of the text' against the horizon of the tradition. But such a self-understanding must be open to a rupturing of the subjective (or transcendental) illusion as well, i.e. to 'a critique of *false consciousness*, whether historical or contemporary'. 'The critique of *false* consciousness can thus become an integral part of hermeneutics, conferring upon the critique of ideology that meta-hermeneutical dimension that Habermas assigns to it.'[45]

Ricoeur then goes further and turns the hermeneutic themes outlined here on the critique of ideology itself, lest it assumes a life all its own without contributing to understanding in any deep or significant way. So both a depth hermeneutic and a critical hermeneutic is necessary for there to be emancipation from the snares of tradition on the one hand and the oppressive potentialities within the discourse or the theory of ideology itself. (For instance, nationalism in the subcontinent was intended as a critique of Rāj imperialism; but in the present day nationalism has outrun its course, and yet nationalism continues to hold sway, albeit as a replacement ideology directed against an internally projected enemy.)

In short, mediating in the triangular dispute between Gadamer-Habermas-Foucault, Ricoeur for his part iterates that the concept of textuality and interpretation need not exclude either tradition (text and knowledge) or *ideologcritik* (critique of ideology/power): indeed, the hermeneutic of suspicion as re-formulated by Ricoeur makes both the moves necessary in any effective cultural-historical understanding.[46]

Ricoeur is a good Mīmāṃsāka, as I can show through the four moves he makes which are entirely consistent with the kind of subtlety one finds in Mīmāṃsaka hermeneutic.

These are the moves:[47]

> ...[I]n the end, hermeneutics will say, from where do you speak when you appeal to *Selbstreflexion* [self-reflexion], if it is not from the place you yourself have denounced as a non-place, the non-place of the transcendental subject? [This is Heidegger's question following on from Neitzsche's suspicions.] It is indeed from the basis of a tradition that you speak. This tradition is not perhaps the same as that which you critique. [Critique is also a tradition.] One could even say that it plunges into the most impressive tradition, that of liberating acts, of hope, or self-liberating remembrance of things past. But these also are false antinomies: as if it were necessary to choose between reminiscence and hope and liberating eschatology![48]

Ricoeur then returns us to the theme of the hermeneutic of suspicion and drawing increasingly from Derrida's unbounded 'deconstruction' to supplement Heidegger's own 'restrained criticism', he proposes this as a means of unhitching the latent in metaphysics and dead metaphors which accumulate and occlude a tradition's self-understanding.

Applied Hermeneutics as Mīmāṃsāvāda

Here is one possible application of the creative hermeneutic of suspicion within the Indian tradition. The examples I draw upon take in seriously both the hermeneutic of tradition and the critique of ideology, which becomes paradigmatic in post-colonial critiques of modernity at large and of other (neo- indigenist) kinds of author-itarial elitism. To take up the latter first, one could argue that the impersonal, abstract, ahistorical, atemporal concept of 'Brahman' much dear to Vedanta philosophy is a 'dead' metaphor, in as much as it is grounded in *eidos, logos*, and *ousia* and therefore has its life or sustaining significance entirely within the discourse of metaphysics (as Heidegger would say of all grand metaphors of the subject). A culture or rather ideology of brahmanical hegemony and renunciative restrain bordering on the obsessive denial of the lived experience, where there is no *parousia*, transcendental signified, was built or idealized on the basis of this dominant and powerful transcendental signifier. Its social praxis legitimated the rule of the priest, a strident and pervasive caste hierarchy, marginalization of women, the under-class and foreigners as others. A wondrous evocation that may have arisen in the poetic musings of the Vedic (nomadic Aryan) bards, which in the altar of later Vedic sacrificial fire is transmuted into a substantive being (in the dis-guise of language), and which finally under the anvil of speculative philosophy ascends to assume the throne on highest rungs of metaphysics. Thus Brahman stands to be de-structured, dismantled, disseminated, deconstructed by being subjected to the same rigors of the hermeneutic of suspicion and critical ideology as Ricoeur has suggested. It may then be possible to recover the latent, the *unthought*, and to reanimate the tradition in more creative ways than has occurred either through the revivalism of neo-Vedānta or the

Romanticism of nineteenth century philological Indology. The Sanskritic tradition is thereby salvaged from the droning subalternist complain of its hegemonic linguistic status, and therefore its apparent uselessness as an ally in the ongoing postcolonial critique.[49]

But that is not the whole story in respect of postcolonial critics. Those aligned to Third World studies and feminist movements more widely have capitalized the kinds of insight and trans-boundary critiques being elucidated here. They have advocated, and developed methods for a re-reading and 'de-construction' therefore of much of the past history and 'civilizing' or literary productions, translatory enactments, etc. resulting from the basically liberal-individualistic, imperial and patriarchy-propelled intrusions into the lives of women, slaves, marginalized groups, the 'other', the outcastes, and the colonized subjects, both within the history of Western-European societies but more damagingly in various countries throughout the world. History of religions likewise might be more authentic and closer to the truth were its voices to emerge, as it were, 'from below' rather than from the pens of the privileged, the elite, the experts, and bow-tied academic researchers who have a vested interest (unwittingly perhaps) in perpetuating certain myths – 'paradigm' – of the dominant cultural force in a society or tradition at large. To give once instance – although I invoke a somewhat controversial writer – Gayatri Spivak's turn to the *Dharmaśāstras* to trace the legal itinerary of nineteenth century British suddenly showing 'benevolence' towards the woman as the object of protection. The claim is that a certain element of archival violence is implicit in the authorities derived and appealed to by both the Hindu legates and the British legal codifiers who were embroiled in a tuggerwar over the scriptural sanction for a widow's self-immolation, *sati/suttee*. The deconstructive hermeneutic turns on pinpointing the part of *Dharmaśāstra's* sanctioning of certain forms of suicide (out of *tatvajñāna*, enlightenment, 'place of pilgrimage' or as a holy journey's end). But only for men and not for women, for it would be improper and unthinkable for the women to take her own life. So, technically the equivalent of *satI* for a bereaved husband (jumping on the wife's funerary pyre) would not really be a hineous crime, but rather a sacredly excepted form of suicide, though not the converse. 'A woman can kill her "self" only by means of a performative displacement, that is, only on the *displaced* place of the husband's bed of burning wood.'[50] The nonagency of the widow through her displaced 'choice to die' – in place of the proper sanctioned conduct of the widow to live a life of austerity and self-mortification – became her 'free will' assuming also her husband's 'courage', and this came to be read as a general law rather than an exception to it. The 'palimpsestic narrative of imperialism' locks into this legal normative and adjudges the widow to be guilty of the crime of 'voluntary culpable homicide'. She stood 'twice-sentenced' or 'twice-dead'. P V Kane, the apologetic for the modernist Indian, she points out, cannot but help echo 'reverence for cool and unfaltering courage of Indian women in becoming *SatI*'. 'Can the subaltern speak?' is not a question but the postcolonial archeology revealing *satI*, not the Sanskritic antiquity however, as the unstable site of the widow's *non*agency resting on the slippages, mistranslations, and corrupt phrasings of the prior sacred text.[51]

PART III: *Scholasticism and Isogesis*

We all acknowledge that it is through the painstaking work of exegetes, philologists and linguistics in or from Europe since the seventeenth century that much of the impenetrable texts of South Asian and Oriental thought have come to light and made accessible to the modern philosopher-scholar. Curiously, the European philologists and translators had also to acknowledge even if they did not take it on board the kind of exegesis and hermeneutics these traditions had evolved in their sophisticated thinking and in the production of their finely crafted philosophical arguments in the texts. But something else also happened to the texts and the careful readings thereof in their hands. There was a particular kind of intervention that their own peculiar exegesis enacted. Andrew Tuck has called this liminal exercise *isogesis*.[52] The claim is that each reading of a text is unavoidably determined by some set of prejudgments or prejudices, notwithstanding the effort to contextualize the reading. Each scholar works within the ambit of the interpretive tradition and the cumulative scholarship, background beliefs and commitment of the scholarly community at the particular historical moment. In fact, most exegesis of the period in question turn out to be instances of *isogesis*, implying that the scholar reads as much of the representative tradition 'into' the text as the text would disclose its own meaning. This methodology has continued to determine certain formations and representation, indeed development, of aspects of South Asian thought as well into the modern (and post-modern) eras, especially in the comparative (East-West) reworkings. Ideological, apologetic and missiological elements foreshadowing (and later echoing) the Company and European imperialist agenda became intertwined with the deep Orientalism that sought to represent, contain, and appropriate Indian scriptural and philosophical texts, inclusive of Arabic scholastic *falasifa*. In part this has resulted in reading current Western paradigms *into* the texts: variously, neo-Hegelian, positivist, empiricist, Eliadist, popular psychoanalysis, or the Bauhaus phenomenon. When it hits the high road of theory, we get a dismissal of traditional methods in passages such as this one by Eliot Deutsch:

> The exegetical dimension of Vedānta is... of very little interest to Western students of philosophy. We do not accept the authority of the Veda (or, for that matter, the authority of any other scripture); consequently, we are not concerned whether one system or another best interprets certain obscure passages in it.[53]

And when the cynical gaze turned on the Mīmāṃsā this is how *isogesis* did its work. Instead of looking closely at the promises the Mīmāṃsā might hold towards a burgeoning interest in hermeneutics, criticism, rhetoric, jurisprudence, most Indological writers dismissed Mīmāṃsā in just the way Deutsch's remarks about the exegetical excesses of Vedānta tended to marginalize this aspect of early Hindu thought. But for the Mīmāṃsā there probably wouldn't have been the logic of Nyāya (the name itself is given by the Mīmāṃsā, broadly meaning 'the line of reasoning...'), not to speak of the richness of Vedānta, which is otherwise also known as Uttara or later Mīmāṃsā. That the Mīmāṃsā did not a place the goal of liberation or salvation high on the agenda, and instead prescribed to a rather heretic view of the non-personalist, or authorless

origin of the Vedas, might have in a large measure contributed to the disinterest shown by basically otherwise committed Orientalists. The polymorphic polyandric pathological perversity of the many-faced gods and voluptuous goddesses and appealing animal-gods of popular Hindu tradition, as Max Müller indeed keenly observed, was to be matched only by the dry, arid, abstracted and lifeless exegesis of the pandits, preserved in the Spartan-stoicism of the Mīmāṃsā; a sentiment later echoed by a galaxy of *Indian* philosophers, from Radhakrishna to the Bhattacharyyas (inclined more towards a McTaggertian Vedanta).

But in recent times, the virtues of the Mīmāṃsā is beginning to be seen in somewhat different light, largely due to the work of Wilhelm Halbfass, Francis X Clooney, and Daya Krishna, who have attempted to draw out certain definite philosophical-theological ramifications of the axiological-ritual exegesis and textual hermeneutics of what is significantly India's most influential exegetical discourse. Their focus was on the *dharma*, and their source the Brāhmaṇas, which set out ritual or performative injunctions and their purpose. All such performative or action exhortations need some rules and guidelines for interpretation and subsequent implementation. A system of rule-governed interpretations was developed and this, literally, investigative inquiry, came to be known as 'Mīmāṃsā', much as hermeneutics is derived from the intercession between Hermes, the messenger, and the gods.

Clooney has a succinct description of how the Mīmāṃsā proceeds: 'This inquiry in *dharma* proceeds by a careful delineation of the connections between ritual events and their textual sources, between texts and their places in ritual enactment; texts are inherently implicated in the world of ritual practice, and careful reading is the necessary prerequisite to coherent practice.'

Clooney notes, I quote:

> The Mīmāṃsākas worked with a narrow canon (*śruti*), limited rather severely to the texts connected with the orthodox Vedic rituals. In their view, the meaning(s) of texts and the purpose(s) of (ritual) actions converge; right meaning entails the realization of what one ought to do. Even abstract argumentation retains its "memory" of ritual practice and its rationale, its spatial and temporal ramifications, and truth retains its performative features. The guarding of this canon was moderated by acertain flexibility, that is, by the Mīmāṃsākas' willingness to surround it with other texts (*smṛti*) which were judged to be temporally later and authoritative only in a derivative sense. This secondary set of texts could be extended indefinitely without any changes accruing to the Vedic canon itself. Mīmāṃsā's careful distinctions and connections among words and actions were articulated through a style of exegesis that proceeded by the composition and scrutiny of specific "textual loci," carefully formulated, examined, and argued "case studies" (*ādhikārāṇas*). The rhetorical discourse of [the] Mīmāṃsā is argued out in these case studies according to complex rules for correct interpretation and debate; Mīmāṃsā guides inquiries into a correct reading and, when needed, into ever more elaborate arguments in defense of that reading.[54]

What is of interest to the modern reader, as indeed it was to the founders of the more philosophically appealing school of Vedanta, despite its rootedness not in the Brāhmaṇas but in the speculative and metaphysical Upaniṣads, was the scholastic systemicity and the exegetical enunciations that could be performed, and perform they must, on a tradition's primary canons, whatever they might be. So there is, on the one hand, the performative contextuality and, on the other hand, the 'expanded

contextuality'. The former has to do with the rules intra-text for interpreting and determining the correct course of action or rather understanding of just what is being signified. The latter is the intertextual tradition of commentaries, that may have a more *ad hoc* role to play but nevertheless were to be read interactively with the core texts, requiring a further set of sophisticated and refined rules for the process. What this meant for the Vedānta was that the ' "fate" of the *Upaniṣads* and their doctrine of *brahman* was to be ever more completely mediate this web of text and tradition.'[55]

I will say a bit more on the former, the performative context. There are basically two sets of rules described in PMS (3.3.14ff.), which Clooney has also commented upon. First set outlines six ways of determining the meaning of a text, each less persuasive than the one listed before it:

1. What is explicitly said (*śruti*)
2. what is implied by what is said (*liṇga*)
3. what can be construed from syntactical units such as sentences (*vākya*)
4. how two parts of a text can be linked as a context, to fill out their meaning (*prakārāna*)
5. what can be estimated based on the proximity or order of ideas in a text (*sthāna, krama*), and;
6. what can be learned from names analyzed etymologically (*sāmakhya*)

The second group (in PMS 5.1) is used for determining the order of the performance of ritual actions; here too, each in the list is less persuasive that the list before it:

1. what is explicitly said (*śruti*)
2. the respective purpose of the actions (*artha*)
3. the order of the actions in the text (*patha*)
4. priority of place in the original context (*sthāna*)
5. the respective importance of the actions involved (*mukhya*), and
6. preference for actions begun first (*pravṛtti*)

Vedanta carried forward the Mīmāṃsā systematics into its *own* concerns with descriptive metaphysical speculations in the *Upaniṣads*, and retained each of the major moves, with the substitution of 'ontology' or rigid description in place of 'action'. The Vedāntic exploration, following the Upaniṣadic Socratic wisdom, was enriched by exposition and summation, question and answer, thesis and counter-examples, *reductios*, and criticisms. The speculation may have gone far beyond the texts, but the style of exegesis and hermeneutical spirit remained within the confines of the framework settled by the Mīmāṃsā. Of equal significance to the Vedānta performative, if one might put it this way, is the continuous effort in every *ādhikārāna* (*sub-books*) to discover rules, or to refine and limit already known rules, to deal with specific problems. Two such rules are *sāmanvaya* (reconciliation) and *upasaṃhāra* (overriding) which are specified through the examination of a series of contested situations in which the general principle as thus far stated is tested, clarified, expanded, and limited in an ever more nuanced body of rules (*nyāyas*), and the first and third *adhyāyas* abound in the making and stretching.[56] These rules make room for inter-textual borrowings of details or descriptions – even from disparately different

schools, such as meditational texts of other schools—and the introduction of qualificative descriptors even those that have not been explicitly stated in the primary texts. The speculative implication of this is that, because *Brahman* is not constituted solely by the text, the Vedāntin may make judgments about the use of texts that go beyond what the texts state.[57]

The third rule is called *samgati*, connectedness of commented-on text. This is a search founded on the belief that even an apparently *ad hoc*, problem-solving investigation follows a logic not determined simply by the demands of the set of successive problematic texts requiring comment. The 'original' text is relocated, as 'pretextual' to the commentary now being commented on; it is now to be read only through the logic of that commentary and its necessary order.[58] Clooney remarks that Bādarāyana, the attributed author or compiler of the core *Brahma-sūtras* (also known as UMS and VS), may himself have been the first to establish this broader and more complex textuality, by his conscious appropriation and imitation of the PMS. And although Śankara, the earliest famed commentator on BS, for the most part attended directly to the *Upaniṣads* through the UMS/BS as a neutral lens, and usually simply deferred to Bādarāyana's viewpoint without treating the UMS/BS as itself a work requiring interpretation, he occasionally discovered in UMS/BS an integrative, organizing role helping to structure the reading of the Us., and drew attention to the fact of *samgati*. A particularly evident line of reasoning (*nyāya*), even if the interpretation derived is false, established the continuity. It is perhaps not too different from intra-passage and inter-sentence concordance used in biblical systematics.

The Semio-Logical Foundations of Mīmāṃsā

In the remaining time I will draw on three insights from the Mīmāṃsā exegetical praxis so as to bring the discussion to its conclusive moral. Zilberman has poignantly shown that a thousand years of Indian reflection on the problem of meaning has produced a diverse and competing array of theories that veer toward the deontic or apodictic modality of subjective significations (conceptual contentive) and not always towards the representational mirroring or unmediated direct reference (of the outside world.) Without this the interpretive task of hermeneutic phenomenology, ritual-axiological (scriptural) exegesis and transcendentiality of syntagms (*apūrvavacaka*) alike would never have got off the ground and successfully applied across to ordinary language (*laukika*) discourse as well.

It is generally overlooked that despite the intense ritualistic foreground of the traditional Mīmāṃsākas, with Kumārila a shifts occurs from the ritualistic to the speculative, epistemological and grammatical, and this is achieved with some degree of dialectical acumen. The staunchest possible articulation on *āstikatva* position makes no commitment to any transcendental signified (which is not erasable). Rather curiously, a good part of the erstwhile defence is based on the postulate of the inseparability of word and its meaning, known generally as the *autpattika* thesis: is

if there is a timeless (‘*nityatva*’) relation (but it need not be eternal), suggesting that the binary is held in tension within the synthetic unity of *śabda* and *artha*, namely, with difference and naturalness.

Now the inter-looping or inter-playing of the binary pair of word and meaning, as if in an eternal wedlock is, I believe, a significant indicator at the same time of their differential, or *difference*, just as it echoes later in the semiological insights pressed upon in linguistics by de Saussure, and through him in French deconstructive semiologies. What they go on to establish is the power of words, *śabdaśakti*, through sentence, speech-acts and proper discourse formations to yield a great more meaning than even human intentions could wish itself to convey; hence the first step towards the *apauruṣeytava*, impersonal meaning construction argument. The selfsame *śakti* is involved in the *bodha* as in the source; it is only because we are able to apprehend sentence-meanings that we are also able to generate sentences, but neither necessarily entails that we are the absolute source of origin of sentence qua discourse and speech-acts; perhaps we learnt to do this from the Vedas, or from language itself! *Vākyatvam astu pauruṣeyam mastu*.

Thus by making the relation between word and meaning relatively permanent, Mīmāṃsākas ascribed to a certain kind of textuality the power to disseminate just those signs and no other; hence the contingency of Samskṛta culture/paradigm were denied; or as Quine has also said, in analyzing our language we use tools that already embed those very things we find in the language, such as identity, truth, logical relations and so on. The presencing of the absent *apūrva* gives Vaidika word its power: this is its transgression; the ontic-ontologization of the latter as the Transcendental Signified (which too is *di*-scended) entrenches the connection of the visible with the invisible: that tension is an important one (art exploits that too, as does *via negativa* theology).

Mathematical and logical propositions, it would seem, function without any assumption of a subject or intention of law whose source has been buried in historical amnesia; perhaps the Mīmāṃsākas had this inkling, but wanted to make Vaidicavacanam, notably *vidhi/niyoga/atideṣaka* (mandatory) injunctions, paradigmatic of such impersonal propositions. They would not accept the endless, possibly discourse-dependent if not meaningless link-chain of signifiers, with the possibility of its theoretic closure, as proposed by Derrida and other poststructuralists. From a more analytical position, an account of linguistic meaning is being developed which does not include an account of convention; intention or intentionality is not denied (no more than some cognitivists want to deny intentionality to *AI*), but its intrinsic locus in a subject is.

The linguistic agnosticism of the Mīmāṃsā has its parallel in the metaphysical agnosticism of Derrida, who insists that what applies to signs applies also to the whole history of metaphysics, which he says, like the history of the West, is the history of metaphors and metonymies With the concept of the *sign* generalised to all the concepts and all the sentences of metaphysics, Derrida hopes to shake the roots of the metaphysics of presence. The whole Platonist thrust is erased in the process. Likewise, the presencing of the absent *apūrva* gives Vaidika word its power: this is its transgression; the ontic-ontologization of the latter as the Transcendental

Signified (which too is *di*-scended) entrenches the connection of the visible with the invisible: that tension is an important one (art exploits that too, as does *via negativa* theology).

To sum up this part of the discussion, we see that in Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā 'word' and 'meaning' are inextricably related (*autpattikatva* of *śabda-artha-sambandha*) and they are together timelessly (*kUṭasthānitya*) and therefore *prior* to the world of objects, which also does not exhaust their reach or expanse. PArthasArathi Misra reinscribed this relation for ordinary discourse in terms of the *pratyAyya-pratyAyaka* (or *samjña-samjñin*) i.e. unsaturated 'own-meaning' and saturated designation, which it shares with all naming signs, and while this relation is severable and open to reconfiguration by prevailing conventions, its function is not reducible to mere denotation or to reference. *Samjña* is itself nuanced towards 'understanding'. It would appear to be closer to and a precursor (if not imported into) the Saussurean thesis of the *sign′e*, namely the signifier-signified (*Sr*-$_{r}$-*Sd*) relation, wherein the signified may loop-back to another signifier, or forward to a transcendental signified (*Tsd*), which may again be another *Tsr*. The link-chain of signifiers has no semantic closure; and if mathematical, logical and legal propositions can function without reference to the subject's intentionality, then even the Husserlian *Sinn* is not of much use. Likewise, according to the Mīmāṃsākas, who are the legalistic mind in the tradition, Vedas as sacred words, *mantras* and *saṃhitas* (songs), reinscribe themselves, rekindle their middle voice, manifest their hidden meanings, both in the act of sacrifice and in the transgressive *apūrva* (deferred traces). This is how the Vedas as *language speaks*. Their empirical sources have been buried in historical amnesia; so why cannot the Mīmāṃsā take Vaidikavacanam, (notably as *vidhi, niyoga, atideśaka*) or mandatory injunctions as paradigmatic of such imperative propositions, and yet remain *artha-centric* in contradistinction to the Nyāya's *padArtho-*, or naive ontologo-centricism?

This disavowal is most important from the point of view of a critique of metaphysics, for by this very recognition the Mīmāṃsākas check the tendency of any self-identification of *vācya-vācaka* (*samjña-samjñin*) as occurs, say, in the Bhartṛhari's *Śabdabrahman* or in the dissolution of all expressions into the Brahman of Advaita, or a Being that might unite the opposites, overcome the tension, or a *parousia*, as Mahādeva or *Īśvara*, that governs their presence (*ousia* as presence, essence/existence, substance or subject, which is absent. Likewise, the Mīmāṃsā's construction of *nyāya* used for reasoning through scriptures), gave the tradition the philosophical virtues of inspiration, dialogue, jurisprudence or legal reasoning, *vādavivāda*, hermeneutic, empathy, critical tolerance and pluralism of voices.

The *Apūrva* is the supplement to the divine/Being; it might even be a dangerous supplement for Hinduism, in that it is like the 'spurs' (*Spuren*: traces, in the Heideggerean sense of the gods having fled and left only traces in the infinitely extending abyss). But it keeps the *aśvavāhana* running! So is the Transcendental Signified as a supplementarity, it incorporates and displaces, inverts traditional oppositions, and unfolds the indecidables, it intertwines the visible and the invisible.

Nonetheless, reciting, reiterating the Vedas in the sacrificial discourse, goes on, as if Work all in itself and by itself, as modes of textuality, inscribing and reinscribing itself. Thus writing is referred to in the middle voice, it is used intransitively, like

lightening, maybe even sacrificing. The text is never created like a work, but rather it is always there: it is not written, it is writing.

Mohanty's Applied Hermeneutics: Testimony and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

There is yet another construal of *śabda* as *śruti;* this we find articulated forcefully in Mohanty's treatment, which I wish to touch upon before closing. Interestingly, Mohanty begins by rendering *śruti* as 'eminent texts of the tradition', and *apauruṣeya* as the self-effacing delimitation of the horizon within which the Hindu tradition itself, and within which, Hindus understand themselves. To elucidate this unorthodox interpretation he invokes Hegel's notions of *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralitat*, and draws on Gadamer's thinking on 'tradition', as the medium of cultural transmission of values, mores, customs, techniques and actions as well as its own *self-understanding* up to that historical moment. And so the discovery of the meaning of a tradition is never ever finished; it is, as Gadamer and Levinas would say, an infinite process in the totality of self-and-*other* discovery. Thus to claim any degree of finality for the authority of *śruti* that orthodoxy would seem to want to must be deemed to be have a misguided understanding of what tradition is.

As a student of Husserl, with a sympathetic ear to Heidegger's thoughts, and a close friend of Mehta-ji, Mohanty has always cherished an openness to *hermeneutics* (or hermeneutic phenomenology) – the art of interpretation and understanding of texts – that grew out of Christian scholasticism and refined in European critical thought through Schleiermacher. Dilthey, to Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur – as we have already discussed. Thus the question is taken up in the context of Mehta's predicament of applying Heideggerean hermeneutics to the texts of the Indian tradition – the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* and the Epics – while remaining deeply committed to the authenticity of the Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, and without doing 'cultural violence' in the attempt to retrieve one's own tradition.

Mohanty clarifies that in the wake of Heidegger's strong thesis, all tasks of understanding is recognized to be historically situated, i.e. 'understanding cannot be presuppositionless, it has to be rather, as Gadamer maintains, *from within* a tradition, and as belonging to the 'effective historical consciousness' (*Wirkunggeschichte*) of the text.' The teleological historicity of Hegelian hermeneutics may not be the precise imperative here, nevertheless, what stands at the beginning – the originary moment – of any tradition of thought is what also chalks out its trajectory, and it is to that founding insight on the distant horizon that we reach back in order to seek new possibilities of interpretation and thinking (*Denken; vicāra*). Therein lies the horizons of self-understanding of a people and its culture. Mehta, Mohanty notes as a contrasting parallel to Heidegger's uncovering of the *being* of Being in its originary Greek roots, took the concepts of *ātman* and *Brahman* as being poised at the helm of Indian thought. But the worrying question for Mohanty remains: whether anything of real worth can such retrieval from one's tradition take place?

'Can we retrieve from those texts an ontological – not epistemological, nor logical – process of self-understanding which is also a self-interpretation?' And he answers this himself, with a slight demur: 'It is here, and not in the much used (and abused) 'mystic experience', that the real essence of the thesis of '*śabda-pramāṇa'* lies. I find here a[n] [r]approachment (*sic*) between Mehta's reading of the Indian tradition and mine, coming from two different perspectives, though both wedded, in some sense, to phenomenological openness to the truth'.

However, despite the juxtaposition of the discourse of hermeneutics with that of *śabdapramāṇa* in this generous tribute to his friend, in his more analytical mood, as we have seen, Mohanty severs the very ontological connection he pleads for and draws a fine logico-epistemological line between *śabda* understood as ordinary word of natural language and *śabda* understood in the wider sense of 'textuality' of authority and traces of 'tradition', and indeed as '*vāc*' (the preeminent Brāhmaṇical texts). At base is the suspicion that a *simple* return to the founding insights may not be sufficient if these do not also permit themselves to be 'interpreted in a radically new manner' (*pace* Foucault). *Śruti*_being the inexhaustible reservoir and richness, this possibility is there; however, all such interpretations also founder on account of arising 'from *our* present perspective'. Nietzsche's perspectivism and nineteenth-century psychologism becomes a bugbear for an aspired objectivism in philosophical understanding. Even more ominous are the signs that this may get us back to 'the situation of 'the Europeanization [of the Earth'], nihilism, technology, loss of sacred and 'end' of philosophy. A veritable 'hermeneutic circle' indeed that would engulf both the West and the East. There would be a foreclosure of the goal of the 'unity of rational thinking'. The hermeneutical circle as, possibly, *vicious circle*.

One may nonetheless worry about the imported categories in this appraisal of the *Indian* tradition that echo the Orientalist-Hegelian progressive (Aryanized) myth of the 'national spirit' imposed as much upon an unsuspecting 'despotic' Asiatic people (and other non-European cultures). Equally, the Gadamerian thesis on 'tradition' has yet to satisfactorily answer a major objection we saw earlier on raised by Habermas and Foucault, in respect of the elements of ideology or the systematic distortion of cultural transmission and communication by countervailing nondemocratic forces. Ricoeur's sound compromise, we noted, requires that the hermeneutic process involve an internal critique even as one is attempting to understand and communicate the understanding. The rise of a strident Hindu fundamentalism and its usurpation of 'the Bhāratiya [Indian] tradition' might ring a warning bell for us as well. We need not follow Heidegger's example and side with the fascists when the 'kesari hits the pankha'. But we do need to understand what motivates them towards their own peculiar hermeneutic. As Clifford Geertz writes in *The Interpretation of Cultures*:[59]

> [cultures] are simultaneously animated by two powerful, thoroughly interdependent, yet distinct and often actually opposed motives. . ..The one aim is . . . a search for an identity, a social assertion of the self [embedded in a culture] as having import. . ..The other aim is practical: it is a demand for [material progress]. . .This tension takes a peculiarly severe and chronic form in the new states, both because of the great extent to which their people's

> sense of self remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion, and because of the steadily accelerating importance ... of the sovereign state as a positive instrument for the realization of collective aims....To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favor of a generalized commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or through a domination by some other rival ethnic, racial, or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its own personality.

It is, in other words, about having control over the *Weltanschauung*, about maintaining the authority to create meaning – existential and ontological.'

To be sure, Mohanty would agree with Ricoeur in arguing that the way to handle issue of tradition is not to reduce it univocally to a set of antiquated and anachronistic beliefs, nor to blindly regurgitate its apparently receding spirituality, or to suppress it with an iron-hand, but rather to enter it, empathetically, interact with it and in this dialectic allow a fresh understanding to emerge. Indeed, the distance – *difference* – that time and history (diachronic and synchronic) creates between a thinker or interpreter and the tradition provides an idle setting for the hermeneutic reflection to happen. For one can then, in retrospect, take into account the totality of past interpretations, and therefore more easily contextualize the tradition *qua* its representative ('eminent') texts to the present set of conditions and circumstances. And this connects nicely with the spirit of the *apauruṣeyatva* idea ('authorless textuality') which he had earlier dismissed as being simply 'muddled'. Who could put it better than this 'physician of culture'?:

> The concept of *apauruṣeyatva* (or the property of not having a human author), then, is – as I understand it – the concept of the primacy and autonomy of the eminent text over the subjective intentions of the author. It is also the concept of the role the eminent texts such as the *śruti* play in delimiting the horizon within which our tradition has understood itself and, within the tradition, we have understood ourselves.... *The more we need to know the author to understand or interpret a text, the less fundamental it is. The less we need to know the author in order to understand or interpret a text, the more foundational it is.*[60]

Mangalam: The Last-/ing Word

The prolegomenon I have sketched and argued for is best described in this passage by Garfield:[61]

> The task [of the new hermeneutics] is to provide a common horizon that can be a background for genuine collaboration and conversation in a joint philosophical venture. The possibilities for such a venture are enormous. The enlargement of the world scholarly community and the range of texts and resources on which it can draw portends a greater philosophical depth and rate of progress. But the condition of the possibility of such progress and of such a future is the establishment of genuine collegiality and conversation, as opposed to contact and the interrogation of informants. And the condition of the possibility of conversation is taking seriously the standpoint and hermeneutic method of one's interlocutor as well as his/her ideas themselves, and taking seriously one's own tradition not as a lens through which to view another's, but also as specimen under one's colleague's lens at particular moments in the dialectic.

So there is a way of extending Gadamerian dialogic dialogic, which is essentially a reciprocal modality for understanding and exchanging knowledge etc in a second person deliberative communicative ethics. This ethics of interpretation takes off after Buber's 'I-Thou' positionality and has the other placed firmly as a significant participant in the interpretive task; the other is not just as a discursive object or scoreboard keeper. One assumes there is rationality not simply attribution of reasons for actions but as norms and rules (normative) that is part of that intentionality and the justification they would offer among themselves for their utterances.

One need not be saddled to the idea of fixed meaning, or locating it in a supposed unmistakeable author; nor need we think that the reader is fixed in her readings and limited by external constraints. However, this need not entail 'free for all . . . any reading goes' attitude; how to avoid the latter; not be a trickster, yet retain the capability of semantic inference, is really the trick. We have to take their claims as true and then ask questions. Just as text are open to interpretation, so also are actions, which the pragmatist wants to 'read' and understand. Relevant norms and principles are involved or embedded in sociability of actions: every culture has a set of norms and principles by which they judge and assess actions, even the most bizarre ones. Hence, not intentionality not as the subjective internal projection etc, as the space in which norms are followed and set out is the critical entry point– this is Habermas's intentionality as instrumentalist rather than simply strategist. Intersubjective reason-giving, namely, that the other will give reasons also for their action; the agency of the other is immediately squashed if you do not give it grounds for rational assumptions underlying their actions. Sometimes here also authorial intention might fall short of what can be given as explication/explanation, but less so here than in the case of text; even harder and more challenging is understanding as motivations, desires as reasons, may remain hidden despite actor's confessions etc., but these are always matters of (semantic) inference provided they are effected correctly and with sensitivity to the material/culture under the gaze. Again, participation role comes in and dialogic movement is not to be marginalized.

But modern approaches to texts have elevated the reader-scholar as the first person, for the primacy of our own authorial project to which we will be giving our life (and therein sacrificed my gods and dogs as well), is foremost on our minds; remember that we are essentially writers; we are writers/scholars/thieves first, and readers/fools/customers second; our institutional driving motto is: publish or perish. As writers, we enact an act of difference with the authors of the text we read, and displace their own ink, ciphers, and *śabda* with our own. We are the author-ity now: in oedipal-*śruti*-envy!

Sometimes in the texts we pick up there are no identifiable authors (more confounding if the *apaurṣeya* claim is built in, perhaps to tease us); that there might be a community of inter-subjective conversationalists talking among themselves hardly means much to us in our individualistic approach, and so we need not concern ourselves with authorial intention, we do not see ourselves at this distance as a participant in that culture's internal dialogue, dilemmas, disputations, quandaries, anxieties, *viśadavāda*, etc. But what about intentional authority in the sense that they have primacy voice of authority over the subject matter, theirs is active voice first. However, consider the following.

Here is Rāmānuja in his own words:

'I claim that consciousness is intentional.'

Commentator (us): 'Rāmānuja, the eleventh century Hindu theologian, believes that consciousness is intentional; he rebukes Śankara's non-intentional nondual consciousness.'

Note how Rāmānuja has been reduced to 3rd person, in a fixed location, with an added qualifier he would never use for himself, and it is recast as 'belief or claim that' in a second-order reportage and in almost a passive, middle voice, as if a re-enactment. There can here be no space for dialogic, Gadamer would claim invoking Buber's 'I-Thou' criterion for dialogue; or one might invoke Levinasian 'Thou-I' ontology: so we can ask: how can we retain if not the 1st person, at least the second place marker/location of the speaker in the interpretative task so that there is genuine dialogue, a conversation, a deliberative reflective 'your-my-your text' process? 20 years on, despite Gadamer, Buber-Levinas, we are still writing (even if our readings in class have opened up some spaces, sometimes due to the increasing presence of NRI/desi students), and publishing in more or less the same mode, and when we are asked, in what sense is the author-[ity]-ial text a participant in your project and vice versa, we work up all our defences and invoke detachability of the scholar's lens, plus objectivity, as if jurisprudence, ethics of prudence also followed the verisimilitude of the naturalistic sciences.

Notes

1 Thompson, 1996, pp. 360–361.

2 Ninian Smartaji, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* 1966, Leiden: E J Brill, 1992. In private though, Ninian Smart was intrigued and held in much esteem the Mīmāṃsā idea of *apauruṣeya*, non-divine origins of the Vedas; Ninian was also at home with Mīmāṃsā's elegant theory of language and cognition, worked up to support the pre-eminence of the scripture over and against belief in any kind of deity, human and divine interventions in the production of the text and therefore its inexorable authority, or self-authentication and self-validity; but it was all that Vedic ritual stuff and endless fiddling with injunctions, which bricks to use for which fullmoon sacrifice and so on that, he found rather unpalatable.

3 I have argued this in two places: 'Review of J. Cabézon (ed.), *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives*', *History of Religions*, vol 42, no 2, 2002, pp. 185–187, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. 'What is the *Subaltern* of the Comparative Philosophy of Religion?' *Philosophy East & West*, vol 53, no 3, July 2003, pp. 340–366.

4 B B de Spinoza 'Of the Interpretation of Scriptures', *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. R H M Elwes, New York: Dover, 1951, p. 118.

5 Ibid., p. 101.

6 G L Ormiston and A D Schrift (eds.), *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1990, p. 11.

7 F D E Schleiermacher, 'Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation', in *The Hermeneutics Reader, Texts pf the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Edited, with an introduction and notes, by K Mueller-Vollmer, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986; New York: Continuum, 1994, pp. 74–75.

8 Ibid., p. 84.

[9] Elyn R Saks, *Interpreting Interpretation The Limits of Hermeneutical Psychoanalysis*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 3.
[10] W Dilthey, 'The Rise of Hermeneutics'; in Ormiston and Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, p. 114.
[11] Rudolf Makkreel, *Dilthey, Philosopher of the Human Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, p. 161 (emphasis added).
[12] Ormiston and Schrift (eds.), *The Hermeneutic Tradition*, p. 15.
[13] Mueller-Vollmer, Introduction to *The Hermeneutic Reader*, p. 24.
[14] Dilthey avers the individuals can never be totally engulfed in the encircling cultural frameworks and organizational systems of their societies, because any such system can only engage certain facets of an individual. In addition, the individuals who fully participate in a cultural or civilizational system often put their own imprint on its functioning rendering as incomplete any judgment based solely on the system's functional purpose. As Dilthey notes in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*:

"The individuals who cooperate in such a function belong to the cultural system only through those processes by which they contribute to the realization of the function. Nevertheless, they participate in these processes with their whole being, which means that a domain based purely on the system's functional purpose can never be constructed." (Dilthey 2002, 208).

It should follow that this insight into the irreducibility of individuals would make it necessary, in Dilthey's mind, to relate intersubjectively with individuals when one studies another cultural system in order to relativize one's own perspective. Yet, no such leap is made by Dilthey and the insight is not applied, even conceptually, to real-life inter-cultural exchanges.
[15] A parallel theory of language based on the belief in the 'authorlessness' of the ancient canonical texts of the Vedas, was developed in classical India, and became the foundations for authority and tradition in Brahmanical understanding, as articulated and defended by the Mīmāṃsākas. See Bilimoria, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2001.
[16] R Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, SCM Press, London; 1962, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, p. 48. I.
[17] K Barth, *Modern Theologians: Christian Existentialism – Bultmann and Tillich*, 1999, p. 2.
[18] Discussed by Gadamer in his, 'Text and Interpretation: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter', in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, eds. D P Michelfelder 7 R E Palmer, Albany New York: SUNY Press, 1989, p. 30.
[19] P Bilimoria, 'Contemporary radical hermeneutics and after', In *Understanding Texts: Meaning and Interpretation Across Cultures*, Bilimoria and Weeks (eds.), Geelong: Deakin University, 1998, pp. 31–34.
[20] T Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 347.
[21] Ormiston and Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, p. 15.
[22] Most well effected in his monumental opus: *Being and Time*, 1927, 1962, 1978, London SCM, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, sections 31–38, p. 195, reprinted in Ormiston and Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, p. 15, pp. 115–144.
[23] Ibid.; see also Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, pp. 9–10.
[24] F D E Schleiermacher, 'Foundations: General Theory and Art of Interpretation', in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, *Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Edited, with an introduction and notes, Mueller-Vollmer, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, New York: Continuum, 1994, p. 33.
[25] Ibid., p. 34.
[26] Ibid., p. 121.
[27] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 195ff; see also B R Wacheterhauser, *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*. 1986, Albany: SUNY Press, p. 20.
[28] Ibid.; see also Ormiston and Schift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, pp. 15–16.
[29] Ibid.; see also Mehta, 1985, p. 184.
[30] *Being and Time*, Section 6; parenthetical additions from Robert P Scharlesmann in Altizer et al. (eds.), 1982, p. 81.
[31] Mehta in Jackson (ed.), 1992, p. 54.
[32] M Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 1975; trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 197.

[33] J G Arapura, 1998, pp. 34–38 (and at lecture where this essay was presented, Melbourne, 1999), refers also to J L Mehta's chapter, 'Heidegger and Vedanta', in Mehta's *India and the West*, 1985. But see Arapura, *Hermeneutical Topics on Vedantic Topics*.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Jay Garfield, 'Western Idealism Through Indian Eyes: Cittamatra Reading of Berkeley, Kant and Schopenhauer', in *Sophia* (International Journal in Philosophy of Religion and Metaphysical Theology, Melbourne), vol 37 no 1 March–April 1999, pp. 10–41.
[36] See essays by Yadav, Bilimoria, Irvine, and Surin, in Special Millennium Issue on Postcolonial Critiques, *Sophia*, vol 39 no 1, March–April 2000. A volume of essays on Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion in preparation will bring incorporate some of these essays and bring to fore the critique developing in this trajectory; in the interim see Bilimoria, 2003.
[37] Cf. Gadamer, 'Text and Interpretation', 1989.
[38] Cf. *Letter to Dallmayr*, printed in *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, 1985 (In Gadamer, *Text and Interpretation*, p. 97).
[39] *TM*, pp. 273ff, 337, 358; See also Jean Grondin, 'On the sources of *Truth and Method*', in his *Sources of Hermeneutics*, Albany New York: SUNY Press, 1995.
[40] *WM*, pp. 264–65; *TM*, p. 249; Caputo, p. 259.
[41] Garfield, 'Western Idealism Through Indian Eyes'.
[42] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences Essays*, 1981 (1987) p. 64; 1986, p. 301.
[43] Ricoeur, 1970, pp. 32–35; 1981; 1987, p. 34.
[44] As developed in criticism of Gadamer's *WM* (1965) in his *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt, 1967), and debated further after Gadamer's response in Habermas et al. (eds.), *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, Frankfurt: Suhrkump, 1971.
[45] 1981 (1987): pp. 63, 94; 1986, p. 332.
[46] Bilimoria, essays on Ricoeur, 1998, 1999.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences Essays*, 1981, pp. 87, 99; 1986, p. 337.
[49] See Laurie Patton, 'The Prostitute's Gold: Women, Religion, and Sanskrit in One Corner of India', in *Postcolonialism, Feminism & Religious Discourse*, Laura E Donaldson & Kwok Pui-Lan (eds.), New York/London: Rouledge, 2002, p. 136.
[50] 'Reading Spivak Reading the "Archon"', *Diacritics*, Spring 2000, p. 37.
[51] Oldenburg, Veena Talwar, *Dowry Murder: Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002. See also review of this work by Madhumita Roy (eds.), 'Dowry: Safety Net or Death Sentence', in *The Book Review* (Delhi), vol XVII no 2, February 2003, pp. 16–17.
[52] Andrew Tuck, *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship on the Western Interpretation of Nagarjuna*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
[53] Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedanta A Philosophical Reconstruction*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969, pp. 5, 166, cited in Jeffrey Timm, 1992, p. 128. It Is true however that Deutsch was also setting up a new framework for comparative philosophy in which the very notion of 'text' (such as a scriptural canon) becomes appreciably important and its location in a *context* or myriad of commentaries, subcommentaries, glosses, and so on equally significant, precisely because these 'form, hermeneutically, integral parts of a continuing text' (Ibid., p. 170).
[54] 'Scholasticism in Encounter', in José Ignacio Cabézon (ed.), *Scholasticism*, pp. 178–179. See also Bilimoria's Review of same in *History of Religions*, vol 42, no 2, pp. 185–187.
[55] Clooney, 'Binding the Text' in Timm, *Texts in context*, p. 59.
[56] Ibid., p. 57.
[57] Clooney citing Anandagiri, ibid., p. 57.
[58] Ibid., p. 60.
[59] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 258–259.
[60] J N Mohanty, *Reason and Traditions in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 259, See J N Mohanty *Essays on Indian Philosophy* (ed.) with Introduction by P Bilimoria. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2000, Introduction; and Bilimoria, 2000, pp. 213–14.
[61] Garfield, 'Western Idealism Through Indian Eyes'.

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The Hermeneutic Circle and the Hermeneutic Centre

Klaus Klostermaier

Since Heidegger the figure of the "hermeneutic circle" has found wide acceptance among students of all humanities disciplines, especially in philosophy and religion, who consider it the best way to interpret ancient and foreign texts. Hans Georg Gadamer, especially, through his extensive comments on the "Vor-urteil" (literally "pre-judgement," an unavoidable culturally and historically conditioned premise) has made it plausible that we must consciously establish a "virtuous circle" when we attempt to understand anything in depth.[1]

"Circle", in such a context, is no longer mere metaphor but a realistic description of the process of understanding which moves from a given premise to embrace a new situation in order to return to the origin of the question. Every circle is connected to a central point – the circle is defined as a line whose every point is equidistant from one point, called "centre". To the best of my knowledge nobody has as yet dealt with the "hermeneutic centre". I believe it is crucial to address it in order to not only describe the process of hermeneutics but to understand what hermeneutics is all about and to recognize its limitations in an inter-cultural context.

Circles and Centres

In the Indian cultural context the circle is used as a symbol for *saṁsāra*, the ever self-repeating process of becoming and disappearing, the endless series of ever-same events created by the causality of karma, whose humanly most significant expression is re-birth and re-death in an unending cycle. The point, the unmoving centre of the hub of the wheel[2] stands for the eternally unchanging, the core of reality, the aim of the deepest human aspirations. On the cognitive level the circle stands for *vyavahāra*: experiential, practical, world-related understanding. The centre, the "still point" stands for the ultimate: *paramārtha*, where understanding and being coincide. *Jñāna* or *vidyā*, knowledge, insight, true wisdom is reached only when

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this centre has been attained, when the circling thoughts have come to rest in the stillness of profound silence.

While scriptures and their interpretation are a major element of India's intellectual and cultural tradition it was always understood that they were not ends in themselves. Besides the scholastic endeavour to preserve what were considered words of revelation and to find their meaning as it applied to life, there has always been a major effort towards word-less intuition of truth and theory-free direct contact with reality through art, worship, meditation and yogic trance. The kind of knowledge arrived at through words and their interpretation is *parokṣa jñāna*, mediated knowledge, which by definition is neither ultimate nor free from possible distortion (the medium being susceptible to many kinds of imperfections). The knowledge arrived at through a wordless and non-sensory approach was known as *aparokṣa jñāna*, immediate knowledge, which, by virtue of its freedom from possibly flawed media and stages of transmission, had the certainty of absolute truth, *satyasya satyam*, real truth, true reality.

Not only all Indian *darśanas*, "philosophical systems" and specific theologies, but also the fine arts and the diverse branches of scholarship aspired to reach that centre, which was identical with emancipation, enlightenment, the grace of a saviour. Their importance and value was judged not by external criteria (*vyavahāra*) alone, but by their capability of expressing, and leading to, the centre.[3] From such a perspective the hermeneutic circle is not so much the (a)symmetric completion of an initial (pre-) understanding but the concentric expansion of a central point or principle.

The ambition of the first Greek philosophers was to find the *archai*, principles, beginnings, central points from which everything took its origin, and which at the same time were the fulcrum for an understanding of reality in depth. Any hermeneutics of Heraclit's writings, however fragmentary, must begin with his understanding of "fire" as *arché*: "fire" (*to pyr*) in his universe of meaning is not only the source of all things, but also the principle of understanding the nature of the universe. A hermeneutics of Plato's writing will go nowhere if one leaves out the centrality of the idea of "the good" (*to agathon*) as *arché*.

The Indian sages, the counterparts of the Greek philosophers searched for *tattvas*, irreducible principles of being and knowing. One would misunderstand the Upaniṣads completely, if one remained on the level of the images and metaphors used, if one attempted to move in the hermeneutic circle without understanding the central point of *mokṣa*. An even greater misunderstanding would result if one interpreted these images and metaphors from an alien Western perspective. Similarly, the Buddha's teachings would remain a hermeneutical curiosity if one stopped at a literary interpretation of the meaning of the beautiful parables and stories in the Pali Canon and did not relate them to the hermeneutical centre of *nirvāṇa*.

The discovery of the hermeneutic centre has always been an emotionally powerful experience, described as "enlightenment", *bodhi-cit-utpāda* (arising of enlightenment-consciousness), "insight" (*jñāna*), "descent of power" (*śakti-nipāta*): it is not business as usual, the result of the diligent work of a philologist, who puts pieces of a puzzle together in years of desk-work. Arriving at the centre – even

having a momentary glimpse of it – is an existentially transforming insight, the conviction of having found the meaning of one's life, the great light that illumines henceforth everything.[4] This experience is not restricted to professional philosophers and mystics but is also shared by artists and scientists and many ordinary people[5].

From such a perspective the Heideggerian/Gadamerian hermeneutics which is content with completing the hermeneutic circle would appear to suffer from a "forgetfulness of the centre". Post-modernists, by their own definition, would not only lack such a centre, they even repudiate the notion. Would one not have to ask: whence can a circle originate, if not from a centre? How can the world hang together (however tenuously) if there is not some kind of *arché*, a principle from which its being and intelligibility arise? One may be ignorant of the *arché* that governs the growth of a plant, an animal, or a human being but without it there would be no organism, no world. A person, a whole age, may be mistaken about the identity of the centre, but the search for the centre, the gravitation of thought towards some deeper meaning, remains valid and is indispensable to any true understanding of reality. There must be an inkling of *parokṣa jñāna* in all forms of *aparokṣa jñāna*, to merit the designation *jñāna*. The pull of the central point must be perceived in the segments of the circle in order to give meaning to hermeneutics as a path to truth/reality.

Moving from Circle to Centre: Dialogue

J. L. Mehta, a recognized authority on Heidegger and a major Indian thinker in his own right once remarked, with reference to Mircea Eliade's notion of hermeneutics: "Strange hermeneutics, in which a valid dialogue can begin only after understanding has first been achieved, rather than being itself the locus of the playground in which understanding has its very being".[6] The underlying conception, which Mehta criticised, is the hermeneutic circle, which requires a pre-understanding, and ends with an enlarged, and reflexively confirmed understanding, of the "Vorurteil". Hermeneutics thus understood is like the building of ramparts around a historic monument, the defence and re-possession of one's heritage with renewed confidence, feeling secure again and protected from outside attacks. It confirms itself. When coming into contact with other ways of thinking the hermeneutic circle acts like an iron curtain that prevents anything from outside getting in, and also, unfortunately anything from inside, getting out. While Heidegger and Gadamer interpreted with great skill, originality and empathy not only the Western philosophical tradition in a contemporary mode, but also wrote sympathetic comments on selected literary and artistic creations, they were unable to deal meaningfully within their humanistic-literary hermeneutics even with such a central Western intellectual phenomenon as the modern natural sciences or the rise of 20th century political ideologies. Their comments sound either naively pathetic or even offensive. Has the hermeneutic circle become a rigid hollow tube, which simply re-cycles the materials once put into it by the choice of individual professional Western philosophers? Have the propagators of this tradition lost sight of the centre?

Only slowly the pull of the *archai* is again perceived by seekers moving in parallel hermetically closed hermeneutic circles. Interestingly enough, the search for *archai* beyond the enquiry into subject-defined problems, whose solutions are sought in a hermeneutic circle (confirming the pattern of thinking as well as the specific methodologies of research in that discipline) is today found more among avant-garde scientists then among humanists, including philosophers.[7] Scientists, sometimes in a very crude way, have remained in touch with reality and have learned, perhaps only too well, to disregard traditions and literatures for the sake of acquiring ever new knowledge. Their search has led them during the past few decades close to questions of origins of various kinds: the origins of the universe, the origins of life, the origins of species and the origins of consciousness. Origins have been sought in ever-smaller particles of matter: fundamental parts of organisms like genes, and fundamental parts of matter like atoms. In this search for *archai* there had been first the exhilarating discovery of universal building-blocks and universal laws that explained so much of what had not been understood before, that allowed the development of technologies in virtually all fields, leading to an improvement of the living conditions of vast numbers of people. Then came the strange experience of even vaster areas and larger questions that remained unexplained, and even unexplainable, with the methods used so far. Instead of finding *one* ultimate, stable particle, that could provide the foundation for the physical world, nuclear scientists found an ever-increasing number of particles of infinitesimal duration. Instead of being able to reduce life to a limited set of bio-chemical laws, life scientists are increasingly intrigued by the amazing plasticity and apparently limitless creativity of nature. Prigogine and Stenger speak of the need to re-open a dialogue with nature, to replace the one-sided attack on nature with which modern science started.[8] In this new dialogue everything is open on both sides – the pull of the centre is evident in this new search for *archai*. No longer are "bits of matter" considered the ontological foundations of the physical universe and no longer are immutable laws of nature expressed in linear algebraic equations considered the ultimate truth about reality. Concepts like chaos and interdependence have become central, and information is seen as the key to both the development and the understanding of nature.[9] Mutuality and dialogue have replaced strict separation of subject and object and dogmatic scientific doctrine.

Scientists, looking for non-physical *archai*, have been re-reading philosophers and theologians and have discovered common interests. Paul Davies, a physicist keen on entering into a dialogue with philosophers and theologians wrote books with titles like "The Mind of God"[10] and "The Cosmic Blueprint."[11] Rupert Sheldrake, a biologist, open to traditional religious perspectives, recommending prayer and meditation as means to heal the modern mind, envisages a "Greening of Science and God."[12] Both use words like "mystery" and "awe," when describing the way they as scientists approach nature and they point to the centrality of the role of consciousness within the cosmos and the sciences.[13] Many contemporary top scientists have sought dialogue with Eastern traditions in which they found more satisfying answers for their deepest personal concerns than in the highly technical secular philosophies or the dogmatically hardened religious traditions of the West.[14]

David Suzuki, who began his career as an up-and-coming biochemist recently produced a Video series *The Sacred Balance* in which he emphasizes the need to see the whole earth as a closely knit web of which we are an integral part and to bring science and religion together in solving the problems of humankind. In one segment entitled "Matrix of Life" he introduces an Indian scientist, living in Banaras, who is also a spiritual teacher of a small group of devotees and whose great concern is the clean-up of the Holy Ganga. The Ganga is not only believed to wash away the sins of those who immerse themselves into it, but also is extremely polluted by the waste products of hundreds of millions of people, which flows daily into it.

Here again, the primacy of the hermeneutic centre over the hermeneutic circle becomes obvious. If one simply were to "utilize" elements of Eastern traditions to "prove" or support an already established Western point of view one would miss the central point and the real truth of these traditions. While quotes from Mimamsa texts, for instance, can be used to corroborate a particular Western theory of language, the central "truth" of Mimamsa is ritual: one would completely miss the meaning of the texts if one divorced them from the ritual tradition they reflect.

An analogue to this form of appropriation would be the formerly widespread practice of quarrying classical buildings of antiquity for the sake of gaining construction materials for homes and streets. The limestone covering of Pharaonic pyramids in Egypt as well as parts of the massive outer walls of the Colosseum in Rome were reduced to mortar to build dwellings for ordinary people. A home to live in can also be built without destroying an irreplaceable piece of ancient architecture. The fragments of the work of art "utilized" in an ordinary house can no longer communicate the message, which the monument expressed. Similarly quotes from Eastern sources, used only to support an already established position – frequently it happens to be a Freudian viewpoint – are not really saying what they were intended to say. They are appropriated into a continuing monologue and do not serve a real inter-cultural dialogue. They are embedded into a hermeneutic circle, which is self-corroborating and are not serving as pointers to the true hermeneutic centre from which they originated.

Real dialogue is the movement from the circle to the centre: it is not meant to indefinitely continue traditional ways of seeing things but to open the eyes to new perspectives on the centre. Dialogue is important not for the sake of the hermeneutic circle but for the sake of the hermeneutic centre: it de-centres routine understandings, and re-centres understanding it.[15] If the momentum of the dialogue is kept going, the "new centre of understanding" will be somewhat closer to truth/reality than the individual centres before, around which (unbeknownst to the hermeneut) the traditional monologue was conducted. It is a fairly common experience that in a genuine dialogue the participants are more receptive to the universal dimensions of the topic discussed and not so keen on repeating particular viewpoints. The readiness to seriously consider at least one other view opens the horizon for the indefinite possibilities of articulations of an insight. In a genuine dialogue one becomes aware that different traditions do not only differ in the answers they give to a particular problem, but that they ask different questions!

Moving from Centre to Circle: Meditation

The focus on hermeneutics in today's humanities is a clear indication of a break with the earlier methods. Analytical and positivist approaches, imitations of what was believed to be "the scientific method", have proven their barrenness and irrelevance sufficiently so as to be no longer commendable. We are ready, nowadays, to accept a plurality of rationalities, side by side: even the "exact" sciences have abandoned the claim that there is a unique and universal scientific methodology and a universal scientific rationality, which could provide the standard for all human thinking.

Eastern philosophies have never been shy to point out that their hermeneutic centre was not established by calculation and discursive thought but by intuition, revelation, and meditation. The great intellectual eye-opener for the Buddhists is the *bodhicit-utpāda*, the awakening of the enlightenment-consciousness, without which nothing in Buddhism would make sense. The Vedantins insist on a foregoing *viveka* ("discrimination" between real and unreal) as a qualification for Vedanta study. Without it nothing could be understood and the whole point of the teaching would be lost in a mere tautology. Caitanyites insist that a person has to have an existential pre-experience of *prema* in order to find the true meaning of the cosmic Radha-Kṛṣṇa mystery. Only after the central light has been lit by an initial spark can the rest of the world be enlightened and appropriated for the ultimate purpose of life. While there is no shortage of discursive argument and critical analysis in Indian traditions, the decisive steps are "meditational" rather than analytical or synthetical. The truth of particular articulations of Buddhism or Vedānta, for example, is not warranted by logical consistency alone, but by the relationship to the central ("revealed") core truth: The Buddhist *sarvam duhkham* or the Vedantist *brahma satyam – jagat mithyā* can neither be derived from other axioms nor reduced to common-sense platitudes: unless one accepts them intuitively and "on faith" on e cannot become a Buddhist or Vedantic philosopher.

Meditative reason[16] is not unknown to the Western tradition either. It ceased to be taken seriously by the rationalists in the 16th century exemplified in Descartes and Francis Bacon. The reduction of the *aitiai* of things from the Aristotelian canonical four to just one – the cause-effect relationship, further reduced to what was mechanically measurable – made all forms of rationality but the objectifying, scientific, redundant. Subjectivity became a bad word, purpose and finality were thrown out and rationality meant only one thing: experimental, scientific, mathematical provability.

Before that (and to a considerable extent also after that) "meditative reason" was a major factor also in Western thought. Quite clearly Pythagoras relied on "intuition", if not "revelation", and all cosmology-based philosophies of antiquity had an intuitive core. To reach it, spiritual practices were developed. Even as late and "rationalist" a philosopher as Plato insisted that the *omma psyches*, the inner eye, had to be opened before a person could "see" the true nature of reality. His famous cave-parable is not a "how-to-think-rationally" instruction but a description of the contrast between ordinary, conventional, and enlightened, "philosophical" seeing. It is the light of that true inner cognition arrived at through the discipline of intuiting

pure forms which guides the true philosopher through the world of humans. It is that light, which makes a Socrates mock the pretences of his contemporaries and which gives him the inner strength to face his enemies and death. The Platonic approach to reality, based on meditative reason, became main-stream Western in Neo-Platonism and its various combinations with Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, which themselves accepted a revelatory origin of their truths.

In our time and age meditation has become popular again in wider circles, not so much perhaps as a technique in professional philosophy, but as a means to find oneself and to centre one's thoughts. School philosophy, largely preoccupied with problems of its own invention, has for long neglected the life-questions which initially gave rise to Western philosophy. Any suggestion, to deal with such is rejected as unworthy of the attention of today's academic philosophers and relegated to the "lower" disciplines of psychology, cultural anthropology and such. There does not seem to be a way to "rationalize" meditative reason in terms of either conventional concepts or logic. However, it seems to "work." Not only do meditators gain poise and personal centring, they experience progress and they develop criteria by which that progress can be gauged. Someone accustomed to meditative practices will not be able to understand how else one could stay sane in this world or how else one could make sense of one's life.

In a more specific sense, without having an understanding for the workings of meditative reason and without having some meditative experience oneself, one cannot possibly understand Eastern traditional ways of thinking. It is evident (and even explicitly stated in the texts themselves) that all of what the Buddha, or Śaṅkara may have said, must be understood as a further explication and amplification of the central point reached through meditative reason: Buddha insists that all his utterances have the "flavour of *nirvaṇa*" and can only be understood as *nirvaṇa*-thinking. Śaṅkara's basic assertion *brahma satyam – jagat mithyā* is only further amplified, not proven, in his numerous works.

From Hermeneutics to Hermetics

Heinrich Rombach, a well-known German philosopher, in a work entitled *Der kommende Gott* ("The Coming God"), subtitled: "Hermetics: A New World-View"[17] submitted Gadamer's hermeneutics to a severe critique. The appendix of the work contains an exchange of letters between Rombach and Gadamer, which Gadamer apparently abruptly terminated. Rombach states: "Between hermetics and hermeneutics is not only a difference, but an opposition, the greatest imaginable opposition, because it concerns the difference between the thinkable and the unthinkable. Hermeneutics is the art of understanding, explaining, illuminating. Apollon stands for that. Hermetics means the fact of closed-ness, hidden-ness, and incomprehensibility. Hermes stands for that."[18] He further clarifies the difference between hermeneutics and hermetics as of the nature of surface and depth. "The surface knows about the depth, but does not acknowledge that knowledge. It cannot do so, because it would be annihilated by the depths."[19] Hermetics deals with the "abyss",

the groundless that is the foundation of everything grounded. The knowledge of the abyss which the surface possesses, is in terms of surface. From that perspective depth is a marginal phenomenon, not understandable – not a subject of hermeneutics. Rombach illustrates his "Hermetic" by an extended description of a Michelangelo sculpture in the Chapel of the Medici at Florence. The figure of "The Day", a male whose head seems to be unfinished: but not by accident. The "coming" of the as yet future day is symbolised in the gesture of the torso about to rise – it is full of tension, anticipation, and promise. Extrapolating from such a work of art (and Rombach insists that we should take artists seriously not only as creators of pleasing objects but as articulation of deep insight and truth) Rombach speaks of the God who can be intimated only in the act of coming, not as an object, a phenomenon.

Besides numerous examples from Western art and literature, Rombach refers also to many Eastern sources that illustrate his understanding of "hermetics". One of these Eastern examples, in a chapter "non-duality" consists of the Zen saying: "Upon the saddle there is no rider, under the saddle there is no horse". Hisamatsu explains it as follows: "This word speaks of the mystery of riding as transmitted from ancient times. Objectively it is an undeniable fact that there is a rider upon the saddle and a horse beneath it. This mystery seems to be a mere fiction, which contradicts fact – thus one thinks. However, this opinion is erroneous. As far as riding is concerned, it is the worse, the more of a person is upon the saddle, and the more of a horse is beneath it. Riding is the more skilful, the more the two become one. Only when rider and horse have become one, i.e. have come to non-duality, so that there is no horse besides the rider and no rider besides the horse, as that mystery says, riding is reaching the fullness of its being and the height of skill. Only then and there riding gains its perfection ... and the same is true of all other arts. The art of archery reaches its fullness only when archer, bow, arrow and target have become one. In the art of writing the highest skill is reached when writer, brush and paper have become an undivided Oneness."[20]

Hermeneutics always maintains the difference between the subject and the object, the distance between knower and known. A hermeneutics of riding will always consider the saddle an object on which sits a rider, and which is on top of the horse. Riding will always be explained in terms of rider, saddle and horse. Hermeneutics by definition reduces its object to the categories in which its own particular "prejudice" is articulated. It will try to explain everything in "neutral" terms to a "neutral" observer. It transforms everything into words. And inversely, it projects the mode of "verbality" on everything: everything becomes a "text", to be "read" and "understood".

By necessity our academic life is largely spent with words: reading, writing, interpreting texts. The transition from texts to world, "to read the text of the world" is an extrapolation, i.e., it is not simply "true" and "self-evident". There are valid analogies between "text" and "world", but the two are not the same. We need extra-verbal access to both textual *and* non-textual realities: "feeling", "taste", "skills" – "silence".

An example may help to understand what is meant. In his *Asian Journal* Thomas Merton described his visit of Polonaruwa/Sri Lanka, which resulted, for him, in a

perception of truth/reality beyond words through the means of beholding an artist's vision of the Enlightened one. As he noted in his diary:

> I am able to approach the Buddhas barefoot and undisturbed; my feet in wet grass, in wet sand. Then the silence of the extraordinary faces. The great smiles. Huge and yet subtle. Filled with every possibility, questioning nothing, knowing everything .... Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious ... The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no 'mystery'. All problems are resolved, and everything is clear. The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with dharmakaya ... everything is emptiness and everything is compassion .... I don't know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.[21]

Conclusion

Neither hermeneutics nor hermetics are Eastern terms, but they now find application in the context of Eastern traditions as well as in Western. In contrast to the more recent trend in Western thought, Eastern – especially Indian – thinking never forgot that the core of thought is human consciousness: a consciousness that is life-related and not theory predetermined. Indian hermeneutics always remained centre-directed and did not become sheer surface movement as Western academic hermeneutics did.[22] It also acknowledged the validity, even indispensability of meditative reason.[23] There was always enough dispute and dialogue to keep alive an awareness of the need to re-examine articulations of the central intuitions and not to move with logic alone on the surface of texts.[24]

In our age and time intercultural dialogue is becoming a major concern for many scholars, who have recognized the dangers lurking in chauvinistic notions of culture and of exclusivist truth-claims of particular religions. One can only hope that it will move the dialogue partners closer towards the centre, instilling in them a sense of an exploration of the depth which is common to all rather than being content with comparing surfaces, or subsuming each other's ideas in prearranged hermeneutic circles.

If one cuts out the professional philosophical jargon, "hermeneutics" amounts to no more and no less than what used to be called "study", i.e. the acquisition of (true) knowledge, the way to finding truth in texts, objects, people and one-self. If one does not associate study with passive appropriation of material, with uncritical accumulation of data, one could well dispense with the forbidding word "hermeneutics" for the sake of the simpler and more familiar "study". All cultures have developed methodologies of study and, more specifically, individual disciplines have developed ways of getting to specific dimensions of truth/reality that take into account the characteristics of the kind of knowledge sought. Religious traditions in particular have always insisted on the need to "study" and they also made it clear that "study" included a development of all the mental, moral and emotional faculties that are required for arriving at an ultimately humanly meaningful truth.[25] The "Centre" provided not only the direction for intellectual study, but the qualities which the

central truth was found to possess determined also the quality of the search. The "Centre" was never seen as mere object, but more characteristically as the (only) true subject whose knowledge implied an imperative rather than a mere indicative. Śaṅkara's exegesis of *śruti*-texts is illuminating. As A. Rambachan observes:

> In Śaṅkara's view the single purport of the Upaniṣads is to reveal the identity between the *ātman* and *brahman*. This conviction about the cardinal intention of all sentences of the Upaniṣads is the governing principle of Śaṅkara's exegectical method. In his commentaries he sets himself the task of resolving contradictions and establishing that all the sentences of the Upaniṣads could be reconciled in the light of this central aim.[26]

To return to the terminology of hermeneutics: The "hermeneutical centre" is a challenge to the seeker for truth/reality; moving towards it implies a personal transformation. The tautology of the hermeneutic circle, by contrast, confirms the hermeneuts in the traditional ways of thinking and acting, even encourages them to buttress these against possible critique from outside and inside. One could speculate, of course, that this fear of the need to transform oneself is the deepest reason, why one advocates the "hermeneutic circle". An awareness of the "hermeneutic centre" will bring movement into the hermeneutics scene and act as stimulus to join in the search of a universal truth that translates into liberating action.

"Deconstructionism", insufficient as it may be in and by itself, and though using questionable techniques,[27] has opened up at least one important insight, namely, that "hermeneutics" cannot simply rely on the inertia of a tradition, but has to make an effort to always begin anew. The strain, which the creative act requires cannot be dispensed with if hermeneutics is to be more than a tautological self-affirmation of traditional thinking. Creativity has its source in the realm of the *avyakta*, the undifferentiated and the unknowable rather than in the repetitive activity of preserving what had been articulated by restating it in other words. While creativity, by definition, is not strictly predictable, certain conditions can be identified that foster or that repress it. Lack of discipline and rejection of all order is as detrimental to creativity as is rigid regimentation and authoritarian dogmatism. Conditions, which allow a person to move towards the "centre" would also be favourable for a "creative hermeneutics."

The "creative geniuses" themselves have always insisted that what they did was not "making something out of nothing," but acting as mediators for Reality. Gautama Buddha said of himself that he was clearing the Path, that had become overgrown, and not creating a new way. Michelangelo expressed the view that the statue he was about to make was already existing within the block of marble from which the artist's skilful strokes freed it. And Mozart is reported having "copied" his intricate compositions from the music given to him, all in one piece.

The topic of hermeneutic circle and centre is but one aspect of a larger issue concerning circle and centre in the history of religions. A. Seidenberg has collected voluminous evidence for the ritual origin of the circle and its widespread occurrence in cultures all around the world.[28] He plausibly explains the sacred circle as the result of a ritual, in which the centre of the universe was represented by a person or an object, that stood for the creator and the origin of the universe. The connection

to the centre is crucial – without it there would be no sacred circle and no meaning attached to it. To deal with that dimension of the issue is beyond the scope of this paper – but it may be helpful to at least have mentioned it.

The meditative experience is, basically, an experience of oneness: a centring of the chaotic play of senses and thoughts, a reconciliation of the self with its environment, a becoming one with the origin and the meaning of life, a return to the centre. This oneness is not achieved by doing nothing, nor is it a state of idleness, but it is the creative joining of one's self with the centre, which is infinitely creative and meaningful.

Notes

[1] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised ed. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, The Crossroad Publishing Corporation: New York, 1990, esp. pp. 265–341.

[2] The Upaniṣads are fond of pointing out that while the rim of a wheel is turning round and round, the (abstract) central point remains absolutely unmoved.

[3] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in "The Christian and Oriental, or True Philosophy of Art" strongly emphasizes this point. "The Indian actor prepares for his performance by prayer. The Indian architect is often spoken of as visiting heaven and there making notes of the prevailing forms of architecture which he imitates here below....All things are to be seen in this eternal mirror better than in any other way." (*Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, Dover Publications Inc.: New York, 1956, pp. 32 and 34.)

[4] Śāntideva in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says that someone who has had the *bodhi-cit-utpāda* has found the "achievement of life's purpose" (I, 4). Negatively expressing it, Śaṅkara in his *Sarva-vedānta-siddhānta-saṁgraha* condemns "the birth of such an evil-minded person, the vilest of humans" (No. 236) who would not exert oneself for the sake of gaining *mokṣa*.

[5] The example of Kepler is well known, who noted down the exact time and date of the "revelation" that led to the formulation of the laws of planetary movements.

[6] Jaswant Lal Mehta, *India and the West*: The Problem of Understanding, Scholars Press: Chico, 1985, p. 181.

[7] Ken Wilber in his volume *Quantum Questions: Mystical writings of the world's great physicists*, (Shambhala: Boulder & London, 1984) has assembled testimonies from such 20th century scientists, like Werner Heisenberg, Erwin Schrödinger, James Jeans, Arthur Eddington and others who went beyond the confines of the technicalities of their subjects in their quest for universally valid insights.

[8] Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, Bantam Books: Toronto-New York-London-Sydney, 1984.

[9] See Jeremy Campbell, *Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language and Life*, Touchstone Books: New York, 1982.

[10] Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*, Touchstone Books: New York, 1992.

[11] Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint. New Discoveries in Nature's Ability to Order the Universe*, Touchstone Books: New York, 1988.

[12] Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God*, Bantam Books: Toronto-New York-London-Sydney, 1991.

[13] Cf. David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, Boston and Henley, 1980.

[14] The best-known and most popular example may be Frijthof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (many editions) which attempts to parallel mainly Hindu and Buddhist traditional teaching with contemporary physics. The most serious attempt, in that direction, may have been made by Erwin Schrödinger in several of his series of public lectures.

[15] When I mentioned at a session of the AAR dealing with Method and Theory in the Study of Religion many years ago, that inter-religious dialogue was one such method, I was strongly rebuffed by the chair. This I found strange and later wrote an article on that topic.
[16] Cf. Ashok K. Gangadean, *Meditative Reason: Toward Universal Grammar*, Peter Lang: New York-San Francisco-Bern-Baltimore-Frankfurt am Main-Boston-Wien-Paris, 1993.
[17] Heinrich Rombach, *Der kommende Gott: Hermetik – eine neue Weltsicht*, Rombach Verlag: Freiburg, 1991.
[18] Ibid., p. 17 (my translation).
[19] Ibid., p. 19 (my translation).
[20] Ibid., pp. 137ff (my translation).
[21] Thomas Merton, *Asian Journal*, New Directions Publishing Corporation: New York, 1972, p. 233.
[22] Even recent literary criticism in the West was so permeated by the mechanistic-positivistic "scientific spirit" that it largely reduced itself to measuring "facts" of usage of words and external elements that could be expressed numerically. All attempts to gain insight and extract ideas were rejected as "subjectivism."
[23] The three steps in Vedantic hermeneutics are: *śravana – manana – nidhidhyāsana*: the text must be perceived physically, be examined intellectually and then interiorized spiritually in order to be "understood".
[24] In spite of their great respect for s*ruti*, the "revealed word", the Vedantins insisted that it had a limited function in the process of emancipation, which was the real purpose of sruti.
[25] Cf. Klaus K. Klostermaier "The Religion of Study", *Religious Traditions*, I/2 (1978), pp. 56–66. The classical description of the traditional Indian "method of study" is *śravana* listening, *manana* thinking, discoursing, *nididhāysana* meditative appropriation. See *Pañcadaśī* I, 53–54.
[26] Anantanand Rambachan, "Where words fail: the limits of scriptural authority in the hermeneutics of a contemporary Advaitin," *Philosophy East and West,* 37/4 (December 1987): 366.
[27] If carried through to its logical end it would have to self-destruct, as has been noted by some of its practitioners.
[28] A. Seidenberg, "The Ritual Origin of the Circle and Square" in *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* Vol. 25 (1981), pp. 269–327.

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Cāturdharmya: Hermeneutics of Integrative Differentiation

Shrinivas Tilak

In his regular column in the *Sunday Times of India* (February 5, 2000) editor Dilip Padgaonkar wrote about his visit to Jakarta to interview the then President of Indonesia Abdur Rahman Wahid. After observing that the public display of Hindu symbols is much more prominent in Jakarta than in Delhi, the capital of India, he referred to the expression 'chatur dharma ek karma' that he noticed engraved on some of the public buildings. Since I had not encountered this expression (or anything else resembling it) in the traditional or modern Indian thought I was naturally intrigued. My efforts to seek additional information about this curious phrase from members belonging to the various academic news groups were fruitless. Finally, I received an explanation (though not quite satisfactory) from Dr Muchlis Hamdi on the H-Asia news group. In the context of Indonesia the expression apparently refers to a military doctrine advocating four actions with one result. '[I]n [the] old regime,' Dr Hamdi explained, '[the] military comprises navy, air force, army, and police. Yet, in [the] present regime, police is separated from [the] military.'

At about the same time I happened to broach this subject with Professor Arvind Sharma of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal whereupon he mentioned that he had coined the term '*cāturdharmya*' with a view to determine and bring into discussion the meaning and significance of *dharma* and its connection with the number four (which routinely figures in such other doctrinal expressions as *cāturvarnya, caturāśrama, caturdhāma* etc.) in order to refute criticism of the traditional understanding of the four *puruśārthas* leveled by Professor Daya Krishna in *Indian Philosophy-A Counter Perspective*. In his review of this work Sharma proposes that the numerical value of four in such instances has been used as an arithmetical shorthand for 'many' or 'numerous' or 'plural.' A numeric figure may have been used, he speculates, to compensate for the fact that often a pattern can only be established at the cost of specificity. Thus, the proliferation of *jātis* extends the doctrine of four *varṇas* beyond virtual recognition of numerical code for plural or numerous. When seen in this light the doctrine of the four *puruśārthas* seems to make two statements: (1) that people pursue diverse and manifold goals [or

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religions] in life; and (2) that for certain purposes these goals may be conveniently grouped into four (Sharma 1999).

Sharma then goes on to provide a contemporary illustration. In the comparative study of religion the following four religions are typically referred to as religions of Indian origin: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. For the sake of brevity they may be collectively subsumed under the rubric of 'the Indic Religious Tradition.' If one were to use a Sanskrit and Indic idiom to describe this state of affairs, then all of them could be referred to as *cāturdharmya* (hereafter cāturdharmya), an expression obviously encompassing the four religions, but also pointing to much more: the Religious Tradition of India as a whole, which is characterized by the four *dharmas*. It would appear that here Sharma is making a conscious effort to replace the old wooden division of the Indic religious world into the four ways of life each in turn marked by phases which modern scholars often identify by attaching such prefixes as 'proto-,' 'neo-,' or 'revival of-' with a more critical and nuanced *understanding* of how these traditions are made and sustained in their organic unity.

Sharma's novel attempt to bring Indic religions under the canopy of cāturdharmya is comparable to a similar development that took place long ago with reference to the concept of *sanjiao* (Three-in-One Teachings) in China. It is indeed surprising that the composite Indic religious tradition or its history did not produce a pan-Indic, global term of self-reference similar to *sanjiao*. By contrast, acknowledging the wisdom of the traditional Chinese proverbs, accounts of Chinese religion are usually found organized by the logic of the three teachings of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. An early reference to this organic trinity is attributed to Li Shiqian, a prominent scholar of the sixth century, who wrote that 'Buddhism is the sun, Daoism the moon, and Confucianism the five planets' (Teiser 1996: 3). Li suggests that although they remain separate, the three teachings also coexist as equally indispensable phenomena. Another popular proverb opens by listing the symbols that distinguish the three religions from each other, but closes with the assertion that they are fundamentally the same:

> 'The three teachings' the gold and cinnabar of Daoism, the relics of Buddhist figures, as well as the Confucian virtues of humanity and righteousness are basically one tradition (Teiser 1996: 3).

The concept of cāturdharmya, I similarly argue, can stand for the Indic way of life and religiosity, which comprises of a single organic complex of four expressions, each in turn representing a blend of several elements so that as an ensemble it creates a symphony (Dharma) in which the adherents (Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs) participate, whereas the resonance of any one given religion may be compared to a melody (dharma). In my opinion, in coining the felicitous term cāturdharmya, Sharma has created a seminal interpretive tool that can ably encapsulate Indic spirituality and religiosity in general besides possibly furnishing a powerful methodological weapon of comparison between Indic religions and philosophies and their Western counterparts. The lens of cāturdharmya may also facilitate explanation of religious change and transformation in India. Sharma has argued elsewhere that Indic religions may be distinguished on the basis of the difference in the *degrees* of

acceptance of Vedic authority. Thus, Buddhism and Jainism differ from Hinduism in accepting Vedic authority in the realm of Dharma but not *mokṣa.* At least until 1000, Buddhists did not regard themselves as outside the pale of Hindu society, so far as Dharma was concerned. In support he cites G. C. Pande's remark that the prevailing web of social ritual was substantially unaffected by the distinction of orthodoxy and heterodoxy except in the names of the gods propitiated or the veneration of a given practitioner. In the words of Udayana, the Vedic ritual order form conception to the last rites was performed by all the sects even though they described it as merely empirical (Sharma 1999: 197).

In what follows below I argue that Sharma's concept of cāturdharmya can, and should be, extended from the field of comparative religion to hermeneutics. Few thinkers remain satisfied with their initial ideas and insights without taking them through different stages of development or without some deepening, change or extension. The consequences, the potential for development, and the manner of unfolding of the initial insight are not clearly foreseen at the beginning. The tendency is to continually renew the initial insight in the light of further development. Often, the initiative may come from others. The present enterprise may be construed as one such attempt at extending the significance of cāturdharmya to a hermeneutics of integration as well as differentiation. Such a possibility is already hinted at by Wilhelm Halbfass who observes that Dharma in the sense of ritual pertained to the re-actualization and earthly analogue of the original cosmogonic acts of upholding and holding apart:

> Whatever the functions of the ritual in Indian history may have been-its fundamental, though forgotten connection with cosmogony, and its commitment to 'upholding' the space of the world, and to keeping the entities in it apart from each other and in their appropriate identities, is beyond question (Halbfass 1990: 317).

The diverse religious, cultural, and social communities (centered on particular ritual practices and customs) that emerged and have flourished in India for millennia can be subsumed, I submit, under a single protean family tree of [*Sanātana*] Dharma predicated upon the twin strategy of *samanvaya* (comparable to the category of syncretism) and *udāharaṇa* (comparable to the category of eclecticism (see below).

Doxography is a particular form and style of literature which summarizes and classifies the main Indic philosophical schools or systems in a neutral or non-pejorative way and spirit, has had a long tradition in the field of philosophy in India. Bhartṛhari may be regarded as the father of doxography in the Indic tradition. There are, he argued, various views or ways of seeing with reference to one and the same 'tangible' object.[1] After affirming that his own *guru* had studied other systems in addition to his own discipline of Vyākaraṇa, Bhartṛhari adds that one's insight gains comprehensiveness from the study of different views (*prajñā vivekam labhate bhinnair āgamadarśanaih* (*Vākyapadīyam* 2: 487–489). This perspective sets that stage for such future doxogrpahic works as: *Ṣaddarśanasamuccaya of* Haribhadra (700–770), *Tattvasamgraha* of Śāntarakṣita (705–762), and Mādhava Vidyāraṇya's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (ca. 1400)(Halbfass 1990: 264–268). A similar perspective sets the stage for what follows below–doxographic exposition of the practical

significance of the integrative and differentiating potential of cāturdharmya (Dharma) for the followers of the four individual dharmas that evolved in India and their respective communities. Hopefully, the present attempt will generate in turn greater interest among scholars to produce similar doxographic works under the general category of *Dharmasamgraha*.

The potential for integrative differentiation is already discernible in the notion of *ŗta*, a self-governing, self-balancing, cyclical system metaphorized as a wheel. *Ŗta* is envisaged as the integrative principle animating the parts into a single cosmic wheel. This vision of the world as a single, harmonic entity resonates with the Vedic formulation of order (*ŗta*) and the Yogic *ŗtambharā* (as in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali; see Franklin 2002). Elsewhere, the imagery of the animated chariot itself as a whole represents *ŗta* (*Ŗgveda* 2:23.3; 3:2.8; 3:58.8 etc.). Franklin has argued that the poetic vision that emerges from these hymns featuring *ŗta* is a study in mutual causation which is a fore-runner of later *Dharma* (Franklin 2002: 1–26). *Ŗta* was also closely associated with yoke (*Ŗgveda* 4:51.5; 10:61.10 = *ŗtayugbhir*: yoked by *ŗta*). This integrative vision reappears in the later yogic texts where the yoke or joint functions as a simple device integrating the divergent impulses or things towards a single purpose. Other hymns of the *Ŗgveda* refer to deities who (1) support and uphold (*dhŗ, dhārayan;* 1:22.18) as well as (2) hold apart (*vi* + *dhŗ*)) the world and its inhabitants and creatures who control and/or protect the mortals and other beings (6:70.1). Other passages mention the 'holding apart' not just of heaven and earth, but also of more ordinary entities (plants and rivers for instance) *within* the primeval opening. The etymological sense of 'upholding' is a source of meaning and semantic focus leading to Dharma towards which various other usages converge (*Ŗgveda* 1:164.11; 9:70.1; 10: 123.3).[2]

From *Dharmāņi* to (*Sanātana*) Dharma: Drive Toward Integration

There are numerous occurrences of the term *dharman* (neuter; plural = *dharmāņi*) as action noun or as agent noun (*dharman*) in the Samhitās. In many other forms and derivatives of the root *dhŗ* the meaning generally is in the sense of rites of religious ordinances. *Dharman* usually appears explicitly in the plural or possesses at least potentially plural function and meaning (as in the expression *dharmāņi prathamānyāsan* in *Ŗgveda* 1:164. 43, 50; 10:90.16). This sense is also retained in the much later *Bhagavadgītā* (e.g. *kuladharmāh* 1:40; 18:66). A plurality of precisely defined rules remained a determining principle and constitutive factor of ancient *dharman,* which stood for the rules and statutes connected with the continuous maintaining of the social and cosmic order and norm which is achieved by the Ārya through performance of Vedic rites and traditional duties. (Olivelle 1999: 37). Initially, *dharman* did not refer to any overarching cosmic order or natural law similar to the category of *ŗta.* While *karman* implied ritual action; *dharman* stood simply for rules of correct ritual procedure.

In the Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka texts one begins to come across two kinds of social and religious orientations: One that accentuated the integrative potential of *Dharma* suitable for the vast majority of men and women who chose to remain in the world. The Brāhmaṇas incorporate manuals for correctly performing sacrifices and other rituals, which met the moral and social needs of the people living in the community. Such practices comprised of prayers, rituals, sacrifices, deities, and sacraments that addressed both the immediate and ultimate needs of these people. The Āraṇyakas, accentuated the differentiating and individualizing tendencies, which suited those who chose to renounce the world to form small communities in the forest for practicing austerities and meditation in pursuit of spiritual liberation. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (10:79), for instance, lists *Dharma* (along with *satya* = truth, *dama* = self-control, and *prajana* = procreation) as one of the twelve factors or principles of human order (Halbfass 1990: 316). Correspondingly, the concept of *dharman* begins to include norms of correct behaviour in both the ritual and the moral/spheres as the semantics of *karman* widened to include moral as well as immoral actions. There is also a corresponding morphological change whereby the former expression (*dharman;* neuter and usually in plural) is rendered as *Dharma* (now masculine and in singular and equal to Dharma). The outer variety and flexibility did not affect the fundamental inner unity of Dharma: Dharma, in its full and proper sense, became the *one* system that becomes differentiated within itself and which assigns specific norms to specific groups of Indians.[3] As future passive participle (gerundive), *Dharmya* is a verbal adjective with passive sense expressing the notion of something (requiring) to be done, obligation or necessity. By compounding the numeral *catur* attributively with *dharmya* we get cāturdharmya, which may be understood in the present context as four differing ways of life-styles that are conducive to Dharma.[4]

Bandhutā: The Principle of Integration

Emergence of the ideal of Dharma can be attributed to the Vedic principle of *bandhutā*, which is a generic term of capacity for 'connection' or 'relation' both in the sense of 'relative,' 'akin,' and in the more literal sense of 'bond.' *Bandhu* implies 'bonding' different elements to each other. The ancient seers intuitively discovered the *bandhu* of the manifest (*sat*) in the unmanifest (*asat*) (*Ṛgveda* 1:129.4), relating thereby the visible to the invisible and the immanent to the transcendent. Subsequent thinkers proposed a system based on the concept of *bandhu* to connect the macrocosm and microcosm (*adhidevatā, adhyātman* respectively) by the performance of sacrifice (*yajña*) with a view to co-order the planes of reality placing them in a relation of mutual resemblance. Since ancient Vedic times the well-established integrative principle of *bandhutā* has been used to determine and to demonstrate the common ground, practices, and shared cognitive themes. Reinterpretation of selected elements was at the heart of the dynamics of *bandhutā*.

Vedic thought, wrote Louis Renou, defines itself as a system of equations which was behind all reinterpretation. An analysis of the very names by which Vedic texts

are known indicates a common theme underlying differences in genres. Brāhmaṇa, for example, designates texts 'where the function is precisely to establish connections,' as Lilian Silburn wrote. As it is first used in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the word *upaniṣad* means only 'equivalence.' *Bandhu* accordingly stands for the quintessentially Vedic system of 'equations,' 'homologies,' or 'connections' (see Smith 1989: 31). It is through the power of resemblance that *bandhutā* emerged as the philosophical center around which the various meanings and nuances of Dharma coalesced. The functioning of *bandhutā* may be explained with reference to Michel Foucault's concept of 'episteme' a central principle or rule that generates and governs a variety of systems of knowledge. *Bandhutā* is an Indic example of a well-known phenomenon in the world history of forms of knowing, saying, and acting. Brian K. Smith finds in it a principle with far more hermeneutical possibilities for the study of Vedism and of Hinduism than has yet been realized (1989: 47–49).

Bandhutā is comparable to the concept of resemblance which has played a constructive role in the making of knowledge in the European tradition. Following Foucault one may argue that the semantic web is constituted of forms of resemblance that connect everything in the world. Foucault imagined them as concentric circles of 'similitude.' One of the circles is similarity of adjacency and resemblance at a distance (*convenientia*). Thanks to *convenientia*, sympathetic and intuitive bonds can be established between humans and the phenomena of the world. They can traverse vast spaces facilitating assimilation or relationships allowing co-mingling to take place. In a field of polyvalent relations the human being radiates resemblances to the world around and back. In the vast syntax of the world thus generated, plants communicate with animals, the earth with sea and heaven, and humans with everything around them (Foucault 1970: 18–19). In the traditional notion of Dharma there emerges the similar tendency to see all reality as one connected whole. It led generations of Indic thinkers and practitioners to stress the similarities more than the differences between two or more things or ideas. They can therefore be more tolerant of ideas which are partly true or true in only one sense. It is not that they are unable to distinguish between what is true and what is untrue, but that they tend to focus more on aspects that are true.[5]

Syncretism/Samanvaya: The Strategy of Integration

The search for connections and bonds (*bandhutā*) gave rise to an intellectual tool of power in the concept of *samanvaya.* In the Indic thought world *samanvaya* refers to merging, accommodation, or amalgamation. To that extent it is comparable to the modern concept of syncretism, which similarly involves blending, synthesizing, or harmonizing. The Oxford English Dictionary defines syncretism as attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, especially in philosophy or religion. On semantic grounds syncretism plausibly derives from the ancient Greek prefix *syn* 'with' and *drasis* 'mixture.' Plutarch refers to the practice to the Cretans, who, though they often quarreled with and were against each

other, made up their differences and united when outside enemies attacked; and this they called 'syncretism' (Shaw and Stewart 1994: 3). Thus the concept began its history with positive connotations: a strategically practical and morally justifiable form of political allegiance and reconciliation. Judith Berling therefore concludes that syncretism is not arbitrary or irrational, but serves a clear purpose–survival and progress. However, during the medieval period, syncretism began to be used in the West to describe religious disorder and to characterize Greco-Roman paganism in contrast to the normative and exclusivistic claims of Christianity. Today, it is often used as a derogatory term and as a loose reference to describe mixed or 'confused' religions (Berling 1980: 6–7i).

Discerning scholars however will recognize and grant that syncretism is fundamental to the dynamics of all religious, cultural or social interaction through time. It is not an indiscriminate or aimless combination of practices and ideas. Rather, syncretism tends to be highly selective and the patterns of selectivity reflect the particular spiritual, cultural or social needs and interests of the syncretist and the historical and cultural nexus against which they emerged. The pattern of selectivity is much more significant than the mere fact of borrowing. Syncretism, again, is not a determinate term with a fixed meaning, but one which has been historically constituted and reconstituted. Simply identifying or branding a tradition as 'syncretic' tells us very little and gets us practically nowhere, since all thought systems have composite origins (Berling 1980: 11–12).

Samanvaya works on the similar assumption that there is an underlying cosmological connection between two or more ideas, concepts or even traditions. The awareness of such a similarity (generated with help of the concept of *bandhutā*) is what justifies the attempt to merge or reconcile the tradition in question. As a strategy of harmonization *samanvaya* first occurs in the *Brahmasūtra*, a text consisting of five hundred and five aphorisms divided into four chapters wherein the author Bādarāyaṇa tries to reconcile the different doctrines and teachings from the Upaniṣads. Chapter one is titled Samanvaya, which attempts to reconcile the different doctrines and teachings in the Upaniṣads on the nature of *brahman*. The second chapter, Avirodha (concord) shows how the philosophy of Vedanta withstands the challenge of other schools of thought; chapter three, Sādhana (way and instrument), shows the pathway to liberation, and chapter four, Phalam (fruit) focuses on the nature of liberation.

The first four aphorisms of the first chapter are traditionally recognized as forming a special unit of the work because they summarize the content of the entire work in four short sentences. The first aphorism identifies *brahman* as the object of Bādarāyaṇa's inquiry, the second defines the nature of *brahman* and the origin of the phenomenal world, the third establishes the methodology for attaining knowledge of *brahman*, and the fourth verifies the validity of this methodology by affirming the consistency (*samanvaya*) of the Upaniṣadic declarations about *brahman* (Adams 1993: 37). The significance of the *samanvaya* for Indic epistemology and hermeneutics was dual: (1) it summarized in a coherent and harmonizing manner insights revealed in the Upaniṣads, and (2) it served the basis for the philosophical and spiritual developments that followed. Today, its significance can be extended

beyond the Vedic and Indic world for its potential to serve a useful model for reconciling a wide variety of competing doctrines, values, and ideas in a harmonizing fashion.

In *Brahmasūtra* 1:1.4 (*tattu samanvayāt*), Bādarāyaṇa affirms that the Upaniṣads declare the same, consistent truths about *brahman*. This statement serves as the justification for the entire *Brahmasūtra* in four chapters (*adhyāyas*) by asserting that the Upaniṣads present a consistent and unitary truth about *brahman* and the rest of the work is an attempt to prove that this claim is true. Behind the many different and, at times, seemingly contradictory statements about *brahman* in the Upaniṣads, there is a unifying concordance (*samanvaya*) which makes all the apparent discrepancies disappear. Section one deals with passages that appear to clearly refer to *brahman*. Sections two and three refer to indeterminate references to *brahman* (section two dealing with qualified, i.e. *saguṇa brahman;* section three with pure, i.e. *nirguṇa brahman*). Section four addresses passages that refer to primordial matter (*pradhāna*), which is the source of the phenomenal world of plurality.

Madhva (1199–1278), like his predecessors Śankara and Rāmānuja, is author of an important commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* although he gives a strictly dualistic interpretation of Vedānta. He considers *samanvaya* to be an exegetical method by which a direct and complete harmony of the whole body of *śāstra* (comprising of *śruti, smṛti, purāṇa, itihāsa* etc) can be established with *brahman.* Accordingly, he formulated principles of interpretation by which the whole body of *śāstra* can be shown to have *brahman* as its subject in virtue of the fullest and highest connotative and denotative powers of the words and phrases used in the relevant *śāstra* passages. Whereas Śankara and Rāmānuja restricted the operation of *samanvaya* to the passages from the major Upaniṣads teaching about *brahman*, Madhva opens the range of the *śāstra* passages to include all 'known, unknown, and to be known' texts. His chapter on *samanvaya* accordingly takes one by one the *adhidaiva, adhibhūta*, and *adhyātma* levels as well as other cross-sections of passages from the *śāstra* dividing them into the following: (1) metaphorical references to *brahman*: i.e. words which commonly refer to something *other* than *brahman*, but which could be shown to refer to *brahman* through their secondary meanings (*anyatraprasiddha*); (2) ambivalent references to *brahman* through words which could equally refer to *brahman* or something other (*ubhayaprasiddha*); and (3) alterivalent references to *brahman*, i.e. words which are commonly understood to refer solely to something other than *brahman* (*anyatraivaprasiddha*) (Sharma 1971: 22–23; Adams 1993: 38).

Subsequently, in the Indic spiritual, cultural, and social context *samanvaya* came to be understood and extended as a useful instrument of conscious joining together of different ideas, an organic growing together of different belief systems and communities, or an interaction of different cultural or social forms. Following Madhva, the literature on Dharma/dharma generated by the four religions can be examined in such a way as to show the relation of identity-in-difference between Dharma and dharmas using the literary device of metaphor and nuance [*śleṣa*] (*anyatraprasiddha* and *ubhayaprasiddha* respectively).

As illustration, consider the section called '*na sankhyopsangrahādhikaraṇa*' (*Brahmasūtra* 1:4.12–14) which seeks to establish *samanvaya* of one, unique *brahman* with the multitude of '*pañca*,' and '*jana*' by reason of the mark shared by both in the context of their occurrence which *prima facie* appear to be metaphor or *anyatraprasiddha*. The proposition (*viṣayavākya*) is based on the statement from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4:4.17): 'That in which five people and space subsist, I regard as *ātman*.' Here, the objection raised in the *pūrvapakṣa* is as follows: '*pañca*' and '*jana*' are plural in form and denote things which are many in number. Since *brahman* is only one, it is not possible to see the multitude subsisting in unique *brahman*. Madhva's explanation is that the five items referred to in the nominative case by the terms *pañca* and *jana* refer to five forms of *brahman* present in five principles of life, mind etc which are mentioned again in the next passage (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4:4.18). Though one in essence, *brahman* is also five-fold (*panca*) energizing the five principles of life encased in the five sheaths (*kośas*) from within as the corresponding indwelling forms outlined by Varuṇa to his son Bhṛgu in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3:1.1).[6] In each of the five sheaths in which the embodied self is encased is present a corresponding form of *brahman*.[7] Employing Madhva's hermeneutic strategy, the relation of one, unique Dharma with four dharmas can be demonstrated as that based on *samanvaya*.

Phenomenologist of religion Gerardus Van der Leeuw has observed, 'Every religion has its own previous history and is to a certain extent a "syncretism"' (1967 2: 609). If every religion uses some degree of syncretism, then no religion has begun in a vacuum. There is thus no 'pure' religion, culture, or society. When used as a normative category, *samanvaya* would then explain how religions, cultures, and communities were consciously constructed in the past and are continually transformed today through the combining of various units and forms. This is accomplished through a mechanism based on the notion of resemblance which is akin to the metaphoric process as explained by Paul Ricoeur (1978) who locates metaphor's ability to yield new insights about reality in its capacity to render things or ideas that were once remote but now appear as closer and similar. Metaphor instigates the human imagination to suspend ordinary reference creating in the process the possibility of re-describing the world. The emerging congruence between two or more things or ideas that once were alien is 'felt' intuitively by the subject. Ricoeur calls this phenomenon 'predicative assimilation' in that the subject is assimilated, i.e., made similar to what is felt as similar (Ricoeur 1978: 143–159). Put differently, productive imagination facilitates, 'the sudden view of a new predicative pertinence, i.e. a way of building pertinence in (or from) impertinence.' 'Resemblance is a process of the same kind as the predicative process itself' (cited in Philibert 1995: 130). The sense of resemblance is preserved in the prefix *sam*, which conveys conjunction, integration, and assembly. Lilian Silburn has observed that in Vedic thought 'nonbeing is that which is devoid of connection,' whereas 'being appears to be precisely that which is welded together' (cited in Smith 1989: 53). *Samanvaya* then may be construed as a hermeneutical strategy and mechanism assuring that all true being is safely located between the twin excesses of identity and isolation.

One Dharma; Four Dharmas: Recognizing Difference

The inherent pluralizing tendency in the ideal of Dharma made it possible ('made it inevitable' would be a better way to put it) to give it new twists and meanings at different times and by different groups creating in the process a broad semantic range that would recognize and acknowledge difference and individuality. Semantically, this was accomplished by adding the particularizing prefix *vi* to *dharma*. The prefix *vi* connotes the sense of *pṛthakatva* (or *nānātva*) which (if left to itself) refers to the excess of differentiation, over-diversification, and atomism that could be inimical to Dharma. Halbfass notes that the idea of a primeval opening, separation, and holding is significant in Vedic cosmogony and remains so in later developments of Indic thought (1990: 317). While deities generally support (*dhārayanti*) the world and its inhabitants, the same deities also hold them apart (*vidhṛta*). Specific rituals or sacrifices re-actualized the original cosmologic acts of 'holding together' and 'holding apart.' All subsequent human acts (codified in various dharmas) only perpetuate and/or renew the primeval upholding, which introduced cosmic and social divisions and polarizations. The *Mahābhārata* provides important testimony to the continuation of this differentiating and pluralizing process: 'Creatures are kept apart (i.e. upheld in their respective identities)' it teaches, 'by dharma' (*dharmeṇa vidhṛtāh prajāh* Śāntiparvan 110:11). When the newly emerging and competing movements (including the Buddhism and Jainism) began to provide alternative interpretations of Dharma, it led to a plurality and rivalry of usages. This trend of establishing particular identity (under the semantic canopy of Dharma, nonetheless) is also found in the *Dharmaparikṣā* of Jain author Amitgati (ca. 1100), that contrasts Jainism with Brahmanism and Buddhism. Similarly, in Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodayam* (also ca. 1100), a Vaiṣṇava philosophical drama, the doctrines and customs of the various religious groups are discussed under the title of dharma and *dhamma* (see Halbfass 1990: 321).

Udāharaṇa: The Strategy of Preserving Difference

In post-Vedic India, an additional strategy of recognizing and stabilizing difference develops: *Udāharaṇa.* Brian Hatcher describes it as an instrument of addressing religious and cultural plurality necessarily involving creative use of patterns and processes of readjustment based on conscious selection and the systems of criteria and classification that may (or may not) guide the method (Hatcher 1999: 22). Origin of Indic eclecticism may be traced to the question about genesis of the cosmos (*sṛṣṭi, utpatti*) that is posed in the *Ṛgveda* (10: 130.3; coming immediately after the much more famous *Nāsadīya Sūkta*!) whereby it does not remain merely ritual concern; it becomes a strategy of eclecticism. In post-Vedic India, it became a method of *conscious* selection imbued with intention and purpose. In Sanskrit, when one selects something (a passage or a verse for instance), that action is designated by the verbal root *hṛ* (take) coupled with the prefix *ud* (up). The process of selection is also discernible in the notion of or 'lifting up,' 'extraction and combination' (*uddhāra*).

What is selected out of one context and reintegrated into a new one is *uddhṛta* (lifted up) which is derived from *ud + dhṛ*. The process is often compared to obtaining cream by churning the milk metaphorically suggesting the process of *udāharaṇa* at work. It is comparable to the operation of the eclectic described by Denis Diderot, the French *philosophe*, as someone who makes up his/her philosophy by drawing freely upon one's own experience using reason as guide (Hatcher 1999: 29).

The paradigmatic example of differentiation or eclecticism in the Indic tradition is to be found in Sage Vyāsa's rearrangement of the entire Vedic corpus including the *Mahābhārata.* '*Atrapyudāharantīmamitihāsam purātanam*' is a stock formula or refrain that occurs more than three hundred times in the *Mahābhārata.* Often Vyāsa interjects it when he is about to introduce a doctrine or idea in order to legitimate deviation, departure, or differentiation from the established norms or values of the tradition (particularly in the Śāntiparvan) Usually, the occasion conveniently arises when Yudhiṣṭhira asks of Bhīṣma clarification over the ethics of a particular line of thought and action. The Nārāyaṇa section (Śāntiparvan *adhyāya* 321–339) signals an important departure from the traditional understanding of *yajña* and *ahimsā*. Bhīṣma narrates to Yudhiṣṭhira an ancient '*itihāsa*' wherein a novel interpretation of Dharma, centered on non violent sacrifice and devotion to Nārāyaṇa, is provided by God Nārāyaṇa himself to Sage Nārada (*adhyāya* 321:7; 336:41). Though told anew, this 'truth bearing' Sanātana Dharma has been proclaimed for people everywhere (*adhyāya* 336:20). This multifaceted Dharma, assures Bhīṣma, will never be in vain (*adhyāya* 340:2). Other instances of Bhīṣma's instruction to Yudhiṣṭhira (by narrating an ancient *itihāsa*) include: (1) King Vicakṇu's re-interpretation of *ahimsā* proposed out of compassion for his subjects (Śāntiparvan *adhyāya* 257); (2) Bhṛgu-Bhāradvāja dialogue giving a novel origin, meaning, and interpretation of the caste system (Śāntiparvan *adhyāya* 181); (3) Dharma-Brāhmaṇa dialogue giving a novel interpretation of death and life after death (Śāntiparvan *adhyāya* 192); and (4) Sage Vāmadeva and King Vasumat dialogue giving a novel interpretation of practicing Dharma with the grace of a *guru* (Śāntiparvan *adhyāya* 93).

The House of Dharma: Dharmāyatana; Dharam-sāl

Through the dialectical deployment of the strategies of *samanvaya* and *udāharaṇa* proponents of Dharma eventually perfected a 'hermeneutic of integrative differentiation' creating an ideal common-law, a pan-Indic tradition, which apportions moral responsibilities depending on each individual's station in life or class (*varṇa*), age (*vayas*) and gender (*liṅga*). According to Manu, one can reconstruct true Dharma in any era by discerning the behaviour followed by those learned in the Veda, and what is approved by the conscience of the virtuous that are exempt from hatred and inordinate affection (*Manusmṛti* 2:1). An analogy to express the intertwined status of Indic dharmas as implied in cāturdharmya would be to imagine a given Indic religion to be like a wing within a larger House of Dharma sharing the same foundation and courtyard though each having its own separate complex of rooms and terraces. Thus, it

could simultaneously be distinct from and yet in unison with Dharma (see Madhva's discussion in endnote # 7). Indeed, the post-Vedic Indic society exhibits a relatively harmonious and peaceful coexistence of diverse communities that, while continuing to participate in Dharma, also gave it distinct colorations. Thus according to Manu, the foremost exponent of 'Hindu' expression of Dharma, Dharma preserves itself, [only] if it is preserved, and destroys itself, if it is violated (*Manusmṛti* 2:75; 8:15).

In the Buddhist tradition the *Mahāpadāna suttanta* rendered the ideal of (*Sanātana*) Dharma as *dhammatā* wherein the Vedic sense of cosmic law and order is retained, especially as it works out in the process of rebirth according to the law of karma.[8] For the Buddha, Dharma [Dhamma] as righteousness is the driving principle of the universe and insight into it is enlightenment (*dhammavipassana*). The redemption of the world is the actualization of Dharma. The way of Dhamma is the way of *brahman* (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1:41); to dwell in Dhamma therefore is to dwell in *brahman* (*Anguttara Nikāya* 1:207). The Tathāgata is said to have the Dhamma as his body, to be one with the Dhamma is to be one with *brahman* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3:84, 81) (cited in Radhakrishnan 1966: 42–43). In the Mahāyāna tradition additionally, the teaching of the Buddha is manifestation of the truth that is Dharma (Dharmakāya). Dharma is the practice of that truth and its realization in stages leading to *nirvāṇa* of which Dharma became a synonym. To take refuge in the Dharma is already to take refuge in the Buddha. Dharma then also becomes a term for the norms of rules of behavior (*sīla, vinaya*). In *Trimśikāvijñaptikārikā,* Vasubandhu describes the Dharma Body of the Buddha (Dharmakāya) as unstained, unthinkable, beautiful, immutable, and blissful 'equating' it to the 'ground of all events' (1998: 423 # 29–30). The Dharma Body is presented as metaphor for the essence of the Buddha's teachings. Put in this manner, the concept of Dharmakāya occupies the same space as the Upaniṣadic teachings concerning the ultimate reality of *brahman*.

Among the Jains, Dharma traditionally refers to the teaching of the Jinas (particularly Mahāvīra), so that *adharma* is its opposite–error and immorality. Both are regarded as basic constituents of the universe: while Dharma includes the all-pervasive medium of motion and activity; *adharma*, which is equally pervasive, generates the circumstance of inertia and rest. Only spiritual realization (*kevalajñāna*) enables one to discern Dharma from *adharma*. Jains produced texts on Dharma providing guidelines for proper and productive living for social organization and interaction (e.g. *Vimśati-Vimśaka* of Haribhadra). As with Hinduism and Buddhism, there is corresponding evidence of the Jain willingness to admit that non-Jains can achieve liberation without having to convert to Jainism. *Yogasāra* (47:84) emphatically states:

> Dharma does not come by learning, not through the book or peacock-feathers, not by entering a monastery, not by plucking the hairs off your head. If one, avoiding likes and dislikes, becomes established in one's Self, that is *dharma* according to Jina; that leads one to liberation (cited in Raghavan 1974: 227).[9]

Dharma found multiple references in the much later Sikh scripture as well. In Guru Nanak's *Japji*, the section on instruction on cultivation of moral and spiritual

culture (verse # 35), is appropriately called Dharam-khaṇd and the earth is called Dharam-sāl, the abode of virtuous life (*Japji* verse # 34). *Khand* (realm) typically stands for a dwelling, a region, as well as a state of mind. The Guru leads all towards truth and in that quest one may dwell in one or more of the five *khands:* Dharam (duty), Gyan (knowledge), Saram (discipline), Karam (service), and Sach (truth). Nanak identifies poise and order in human life and cosmic system as the key concepts of Dharma (Dharam). Dharma is the child of compassion and contentment. One's spiritual progress, therefore, is better served through behaviour guided by contentment and compassion and as expressed through *nam* (holy name), *dan* (charity), *ishnan* (physical, mental, and moral purity), *kirt-karana* (living an honest labour), and *wand-chakhna* (sharing food with others).[10]

The House of Dharma stands on the foundation of select auspicious values connoting general well-being, health, contentment, peace, and prosperity. A galaxy of overlapping concepts were deployed toward that objective: *śrī, lakṣmī, lābha, śreyas, hita, bhadra, śubha, kalyāṇa, puṇya, mangalam*. Adherents of most Indic religions even today are able to intuit in them the common bond (*bandhutā*) that holds them together. Generic lists of virtues which a layperson ought to possess became current and very popular from the classical period onward. They are often included in the Kathā literature wherever the excellences of the hero are described. The 'Dhammaṭṭhavaggo' section of *Dhammapada* brings together verses in popular use of the period and gathered from different sources on righteous behavior based on the Dharma. Haribhadra's *Dharmabindu* laid in a clear and precise manner the principles of conduct in everyday life which would, if properly observed, make an individual a model *śrāvaka* (Jain householder) or a *yati* (ascetic). Written in about 1160, *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra (1088–1170) is another compilation of encyclopedic proportion on the duties of men and women in the region of modern Gujarat. *Traivarṇikācāra* of Somasena, a treatise in Sanskrit composed in 1610 in Karnataka, advocates many practices which would be found contrary to the Jain faith by the ideologues of the twentieth century (Williams 1991: 31).

Overall, such texts pertain to the acceptable norms of social organization, righteous individual and collective behavior, ritual actions, rules of procedure, moral, religious, and pious actions and attitudes, civil and criminal law, legal procedure and punishment, penances for infractions of Dharma, and latitude for transgressing it in a situation of distress (*āpaddharma*). The sphere of Dharma is extended to such social institutions as marriage, adoption, inheritance, social contracts, judicial procedure, and punishment of crimes. It includes all private activities ranging from toilet, bathing, brushing the teeth, food preparation and eating, sexual conduct, and etiquette. Integrative differentiation engendered by Dharma is not concentrated in any one particular region, culture or religion that arose on the soil of India. Rather, it pervades the Indic civilization through the lore and repository of song, dance, play, sculpture, painting, and religious narratives. Edward Dimock has suggested that the diversity to be found in Indian subcontinent is limited by patterns which recur throughout the area, so that each region, despite its differences from other regions, expresses the patterns (the structural paradigmatic aspects) of the whole. Each regional culture is therefore to be seen as a structural microcosm of the full system.

The regional variation does not disturb significantly the unified underlying patterning deriving from the larger cultural unit [comparable to Dharma] (Dimock 1963: 1–5). Following David Mandelbaum this integrative potential may be elaborated as follows:

> There is a traditional basis for the larger national identification. It is the idea, mainly engendered by Hindu religion but shared by those of other religions as well, that there is an entity of India to which all inhabitants belong. The Hindu epics and legends, in their manifold versions, teach that the stage for the gods was nothing less than the entire land and that the land remains *one* (emphasis added) religious setting for those who dwell in it (1972: 140).

In this integrative land yogins, mystics, and healers defined themselves in dialogue with one another and with the past on the concept of Dharma. It betrays the belief that Indic pluralistic thought is not primarily concerned with maintaining the integrity of the borrowed idea in terms of its original tradition. Innovation rather adjusts or reforms (as the need be) a given cultural or social practice or intellectual or spiritual insight within the rules and framework of Dharma. What is intellectually significant is not the synthesis of differing world views, but the betterment of the spiritual vision or practice. These community leaders therefore should be seen as pragmatic mediators creatively responding to new situations, threats, tensions, and needs.

These Four Make One Family

The similarities (and differences) among the different concepts as espoused by each of the four Indic religions can be characterized in terms of what Ludwig Wittgenstein called ‘family resemblances,’ in which there is a complicated network of similarities (and differences) that overlap and crisscross. At the same time, we must be careful not to overemphasize similarities at the expense of differences and thereby elide the concepts into one another. Families are marked by differences as well as by similarities, and these differences are by no means insignificant (Cort 2001: 186–187). Four major groupings out of which the traditional Indic society has been woven, therefore, are at once alike and distinct from each other.[11] In this context what Louis Renou observed long ago is relevant. The danger in considering Indic religions as separate groups of phenomena is that one trends to forget that certain essentially Indic features characterize the all. Analogies, for instance, may be demonstrated between Vedism and Theravada, more particularly between the *gṛhyasūtras* (domestic rituals) and the Buddhist practice of *pratimokṣa*; even though the explanation may lie, as Renou pointed out, not in borrowing but in a basis of thought common to both. The secular approach of the Upaniṣads is characteristic also of Buddhism and Jainism (Renou 1968: 7–8). Similarly, in reference to the *Mahāvamśa*, Wilhelm Geiger commented that its study ‘shows us how fallacious it is entirely to separate Buddhism from Brahmanism.’[12]

Robert Lingat too observes that ‘Buddhist’ and ‘Hindu’ did not become mutually exclusive identities at any time. Among the laity, Buddhism was always

complementary to communal religion since one continued to practice the local religion. The lay followers of Buddhism did not constitute a separate group of the population (Lingat 1989: 21–22). Buddhists continue to offer worship to 'Hindu' deities even today in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. Those becoming Buddhists were not asked for an explicit repudiation of previous doctrinal 'errors,' nor was it necessary to renounce religious practices that were current in layperson's community. Richard Gombrich points out that the layperson was not registered as a new Buddhist among the existing number of believers. Even now, in Buddhist countries no formality exists by which one becomes a Buddhist layperson (Gombrich 1988: 118–136).

Dharma and Dharmas: Symphony and Polyphony

David Cunningham notes that musical performance requires more than one thing at a time. A concert (*con* + *certare* = 'to act together') consists of multiple notes being played or sung at the same time by a group. When we attend a concert and hear more than one noted being played at once, we do not usually react negatively. We do not consider the simultaneous sounding of two or more notes to be contradictory, meaningless, or against reason. Neither do we believe that this has somehow violated a principle of music (or of reason); indeed, we often *enjoy* hearing a number of different sounds at once. In music such simultaneous multiplicity seems not only to be allowed but to be encouraged and rewarded. Musicology has a technical term for this–*polyphony.* It can be applied to other contexts: any time we understand two or more different (even possibly 'opposing') ideas being proposed, performed or enacted simultaneously, we have encountered polyphony. Cunningham observes that sometimes the word polyphony is taken to be a synonym of harmony where more than one note is played at a time, and none of those notes is so dominant that it renders another mute (1998: 127–128).

A polyphonic perspective on cāturdharmya would similarly help reject the claim or assumption that two or more dharmas must necessarily work against one another. Too often, scholars or thinkers operate with false dichotomies assuming that increased attention to one element necessarily decreases the significance of the other. Dharma proclaims a polyphonic understanding of the world process in which difference provides an alternative to monolithic homogeneity without becoming a source of exclusion. Recognizing the stress on compassion as central to Buddhism, for instance, does not imply a diminished role (even absence) of compassion in other dharmas. All four have their distinctive melodies and all are 'played' and 'heard' simultaneously without damage to Dharma and its integrity. Employing the language and metaphor of polyphony thus would allow us to recognize and emphasize oneness as well as difference among dharmas. Put differently, the unity of the dharmas as projected under the House of Dharma is comparable to the musical unity of differential flux that is not achieved at the expense of diversity. The four dharmas exist only in reciprocal and eternal relatedness to Dharma. Dharma is not Dharma

apart from the way in which the four dharmas give to and receive from each other what they essentially are. The four do not merely co-inhere; they also dynamically *constitute* one another.

There is a parallel in the Christian canonization process: the differing accounts offered by the four evangelists, for instance, are not seen as a barrier to the inclusion of all four in the canon. Theologians spoke of a 'golden chain' (*catena aurea*) of interpretive wisdom which linked together the (widely varying) interpretations of writers across the centuries for each verse of the text. Medieval interpreters referred to a 'fourfold sense of scripture,' in which each text plumbed for specific applications to doctrine, moral teaching, and questions about the destiny of the world as well as its literal and cultural sense. Today however, laments Cunningham, this richness of polyphonic readings are often lost or reduced to a wooden hermeneutical absolutism in which there is assumed to be 'only one right answer' (1998: 138–139).

Applied Cāturdharmya: Musical Organization of Ādi Granth

Like most Indians, Guru Nanak was familiar with the notion of classical music (*rāga*) as a means of attaining joy and transcendent bliss. *Ādi Granth* categorically declares that there is no impurity in music or in the Vedas (# 1240). He accordingly adopted music as a means for molding the spiritual, mystical and temporal life of the devotees. The beauty of the Granth lies in the harmonious and wonderfully expressive combination (*samanvaya*) of *rāgas*, meters, tropes, imagery and signs. Later, Guru Arjan included the *Rāgamālā*, the garland of musical modes at the end of the Granth listing eighty-four *rāgas* classified into the scheme of Rāga-Rāgiṇī-Putra. *Rāga* is derived from the Sanskrit root *rañj* meaning emotional coloration. As a melodic pattern it is composed to suit and evoke a particular mood with reference to the particular time of day or night and season. As such, it is time-, space-, and *guṇa*-specific. Furthermore, each *rāga* has a particular spiritual significance derived on the basis of usage and custom. In any musical performance great care is taken to produce the exact set of vibration (*nāda*) to evoke the mood ascribed to a particular *rāga.* Alain Danielou observes that

> The cycle of the day corresponds to the cycle of life which has its own dawn, its noon, its evening. Each hour represents a different stage of development and is connected to a certain kind of emotion. The cycle of sounds is ruled by the same laws as all other cycles. This is why there are natural relationships between particular hours and the moods evoked by musical modes (1968: 95).

When the formulation of the Sikh canon was completed musical mode emerged as its key organization principle. The Granth is arranged according to (1) the *rāga*; (2) the nature or metre of the poem; (3) authorship; and the clef (Ghar). Under each *rāga* the hymns are arranged according to the musical clef in which each is to be sung. While *rāga* divides the octave in different ways each suited to the

expression of particular mood; *tāla* reconciles the varying pulses through a complex structure of rhythm. The *rāgas* evoke and express various moods and sentiments in the listener: from calm, beauty, compassion, awe, anger, heroism, to surprise. The verses of the Granth, accordingly, are set to judicious selection of *rāgas* from the *Rāgamālā*. In his compositions Guru Nanak used nineteen *rāgas* out of which ten are morning *rāga*, four mid-day *rāga,* and three are evening *rāga*. The remaining two *rāgas* are seasonal. He blended Basant and Hindol *rāgas* to create a mood of sobriety and a balancing effect on the audience. The poetic imagery in the Granth thus seeks to discourage sectarianism and promote the inclusive ideal (Pashaura Singh 2000: 147). The successors of Guru Nanak introduced additional *rāgas* with suitable modifications to emphasize and reflect intensity of the *nirguṇa* aspiration of the Sikh dharma.[13]

Guru Arjan developed the religious potential of Sikh Dharma though openness to ideas and practices from the common pool and reservoir of Dharma as it was expressed in prior Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain versions. Arjan's disagreement was not over devotion (*bhakti*); but over what constitutes proper religious performance and who is recipient of *bhakti*. He consciously made the Bhagat Bani (utterances of devotees) part and parcel of the first canonical text of the Granth (nine hundred and twenty-two hymns; about eight percent of the total) in the historical context of Akbar's rule and his experiments with religious pluralism. The Bhagat Bani incorporates hymns of fifteen medieval Indic poet saints of varying backgrounds: Sant, Sufi or Nātha. Hymns of Kabir (two hundred and twenty-four) figure prominently followed by those of Namdev (sixty-one), Ravidas, Shaikh Farid and eleven other saints. Arjan's selection process highlights both the exclusive and inclusive aspects of his editorial policy. His logic favours those hymns that stress the *nirguṇa* form of expression and conform to Nanak's original insight and vision placing them at the end of each *Rāga* section in the Granth. Arjan consciously inserts his own hymns and couplets in some of their works and initiates a dialogue with them. The Bhagat Bani, therefore, reflects the cosmopolitan nature of Sikh dharma rendering the Granth an 'interfaith scripture' (Pashaura Singh 2003: 180).

Thus Arjan not only adopted the ideas and practices of the three earlier expressions of Dharma; he also adapted them to the particular Sikh world view. In his own mind, Arjan still was a Sikh teaching the Sikh. The principles of selectivity and the tenacious affirmation of the House of Dharma are clearly visible. The case of Arjan helps to illustrate dynamics of syncretism in the history of Indic religions (Berling 1980: 238). It also reveals how syncretism is distinct from synthesis which may fuse disparate elements from two or more traditions obscuring in the process their original definitions, overtones, connotations, and associations. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, explains the *samanvaya* of Jñānayoga and Bhaktiyoga with a homely metaphor drawn from the tradition of āyurveda: If one takes ghee by itself it makes the mouth greasy; heats the body; acts as a purgative; and increases phlegm. But when it is taken with sugar there is neither cough nor purgation but only a sweet taste. Similarly, when devotion is added to knowledge, it provides release (see Kohli 1991: 19).

Challenges to Cāturdharmya

By the eighteenth century when the European powers began to make incursions into India, Dharma had evolved into an umbrella term encompassing a body of indigenous religious beliefs distinct from exogenous religions of Islam or Christianity that were later introduced into India. At least at the popular level, insists Harjot Oberoi, there was no single authoritative sacred text, deity or ritual specialist–this polysemism was perhaps the Indic religious world's great strength. Its composite ritual culture connoted heterogeneity in religious beliefs, plurality of rituals, and diversity of lifestyles. Attending seasonal festivals at Hardwar, Gaya, (and later) Amritsar did not constitute a transgression of the prevailing Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, (and later) Sikh identity, whatever scholarly studies may assert today. Dharma tended to provide a bridge of discourse between cosmic and secular time, between oral narration and textual exegesis, between order and chaos. Contemporary modes of knowledge formation (myths, narratives, folklore, and plays) received a secure place within one's cosmology. Most Indians could move imperceptibly in and out of multiple identities. Individual Indic religions, thus, found a convenient cultural reference system in Dharma, which I submit may conveniently be expressed through the notion of cāturdharmya.

Understanding religion as systematized sociological unit claiming exclusive loyalty from its adherents and opposing an amorphous religious imagination is a relatively recent development in the history of India. It is only in the nineteenth century that some Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh 'reformers' began to present, what they perceived to be rationalized and demythologized versions of their respective faiths devoid of reference to various aspects of the popular religion.[14] There were attempts to posit compatibility between Western empiricism, Western science, and rationalism and the teachings of the Buddha, Mahāvīra or Nanak. Once such tidy cultural constructs were put in place, they rapidly gained wide support and became reified in history. But in the process they split the composite Indic cultural and social orientation (which was held together in creative tension by Dharma) into separate, distinct, and concrete units recognized today as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism. A resolution passed at the Fifth Jain Svetambar Conference held in Ahmedabad in 1907 carefully lists harmful customs that Jains must avoid. They include the observance of the customs and practices of the followers of other religions on holy days, especially the performance of Lakşmīpūjā on the day of Diwali (Cort 2001: 232 fn 55). Oberoi reminds us that these differences began to appear only in the nineteenth century (1994: 17–18).

Consequently, much modern historiography of Indic religions passes over in silence the Buddhist, Jain or even Sikh participation in popular religion rooted in the veneration of saints and cultic or ritual practices. In early Sikh tradition God was almost exclusively conceived in masculine terms and metaphors. Oberoi (1994: 97) writes that following the Purāņic antecedents later *Dasam Granth* narratives included the soteriological aspects of the divine feminine. The goddess myths in the *Dasam Granth* transposed the early tradition and added a new maternal dimension to Sikh understanding of ultimate reality. The nineteenth century leadership

in Punjab launched a powerful campaign for Sikh withdrawal from such popular religion (Oberoi 1994: 141, 169). Today, notes Fenech, all the Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs of the pre-Khalsa past are presented with beard and turbans though there is little evidence to support these specific representations. It is largely this legacy created by the Singh Sabha which Sikh religious nationalists of today have inherited (Fenech 2002: 841). In the home town (Sunam) of martyr Udham Singh (1899–1940), a revolutionary fighting for India's freedom in England, two statues stand only metres apart, one depicts him clean-shaven. The other shows a Khalsa Sikh complete with visible external symbols. This fact is testimony that there were groups in Sunam competing over the ways to preserve the memory of Udham Singh (and by extension themselves) (French 2002: 850–851).

Today it has become common to employ such categories as 'Sikh,' 'Hindu,' 'Buddhist,' or 'Jain' as if they were self-explanatory classifications rooted in history. Yet, there is nothing natural or self-evident about such categories. As Harjot Oberoi has observed, historically, it is more precise to speak in terms of simultaneity of religious identities rather than distinct, universal, religious collectivites (Oberoi 1994: 418). Influenced in part by the precepts of Orientalism, these ideologues constructed an identity, based on these presuppositions. Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain reformers took for granted the existence of a particular natural 'essence' which they assiduously attempted to rescue and circumscribe. The projection of categories derived from European, North American, and modern Indian secular experience onto the quite different world of traditional Indic religions leads many modern Indologists to treat Indic religions primarily as a matter of distinct schools with their own distinct and well-entrenched identities.

Restoring Integrative Potential of Cāturdharmya

Yet, perceptive scholars writing on areas of South Asia from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka have repeatedly attested to the pervasiveness (*vyāpti*) of cultural, religious, and social pluralism. Paul Dundas begins his study *The Jains* by drawing attention to the fluidity of attitudes toward religious identity in India. Such exclusive labels as 'Hinduism' and 'Jainism,' he writes, have not in fact always been sufficiently adequate indicators of the complex and often shifting nature of religious identity (1992: 5). The fluidity pervades the social and political dimensions of identity as well. Dundas quotes typical findings in the Census Report of 1921 describing the 'unwillingness of the Jains and Sikhs to be classed separately from Hindus' (Dundas 1992: 4). The observations of scholars from Geiger to Oberoi would urge us to rethink the whole concept of independent religious communities as applied to contemporary Indian society.

There is no one single dharma (say, Jainism), but multiple dharmas: all subsumed under Dharma (= cāturdharmya). The four dharmas may be seen as the *resembling* (not identical mind you) dynamic counterforms (*pratimā*) of Dharma (*pramā*) sharing in the same essence but manifesting it differently.[15] Again, a given religious

tradition can no longer be seen as static. It is only then will we begin to see that the sum of social and cultural development in India's long history is reflected in each of the four dharmas. The Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs did not remain merely passive witnesses to these developments. Instead, they were active participants in creating and changing India's history. If *karman* is taken to understand ritual culture, then we can more satisfactorily answer the query concerning the slogan 'chatur dharma ek karma' with which I started this piece. Though with reference to spiritual liberation, each of the four dharmas evolved its distinct and individual identity; ritually (*karman*), they seem to be rooted in the composite religious orientation (cāturdharmya), which is peculiar to India.

Hindus, Buddhists, Jains or Sikhs do not constitute a cultural island. Each of these communities is, rather, constituted socially and imagined culturally in relation to other sections of Indic society. Here, 'in relation to' also includes 'against.' On the whole, the reference points of Hindu/Buddhist/Jain/Sikh social identity are inclusive as well as contrastive. As Laidlaw has observed, this is a general feature of complex cultural settings such as India's where one group's cultural outlook includes a perspective on other groups' perspectives. To this one must also add that *even internally*, Jains or others do not constitute a homogenous community. All four communities are divided along the lines of caste and sect. The picture is complex because the reference points are subtly overlapping and the internal divisions are cross-cutting. Laidlaw astutely remarks, the existing connections among them (when one tries to conceptualize them) come across as linkages without determinate edges, in a body without a surface for a boundary (Laidlaw 1995: 84). In their own unique ways Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs have conformed to shaping each other's world of class and region. For instance, while the Jain doctrine and practice of *ahimsā* is certainly distinctive, it developed in close dialogue with Hinduism and Buddhism. It is therefore the core and essence of Dharma. Etymologically, *ahimsā* is a form of *dhāraṇā*, 'upholding' and 'preservation' (Halbfass 1990: 318). The golden rule of not doing to others what one hopes and wishes not to be done to oneself is evident in the concept of the totality of Dharma (*dharmasarvasva*) which *Vikramacarita* (13:2) summarizes in the following maxim: It is meritorious to be helpful to others (*paropakārah*) and evil to hurt them (*parapīdanam*).[16]

A perusal of Indic annual ritual calendars also reveals a certain overlap and parallelism. As a symbolically charged activity, any festival is open to multiple levels of interpretation. Not surprisingly, a festival such as Diwali is celebrated by followers of Indic religions with different understandings of its origin and meaning. The Hindu Navarātri and the Jain Oli show certain structural or temporal overlap. At the spring festival of Vasanta Pancamī, Jain women (like Hindu women) wear bright yellow saris to welcome the new season. A Jain funeral procession looks and sounds much like a Hindu one; indeed, as Laidlaw points out, death ritual is 'contracted out' to Hindu culture [i.e., to Brahmin priests] (Laidlaw 1995: 94).

Indic communities are integrated, however, in rather a specific way. The image of a bounded entity may be misleading. Sikh or Jain cultural distinctiveness does not rest on rituals or practices in which people are marked as different and counted in or out, which is to say the distinctiveness is not constituted by symbolized boundaries.

What seems to make the difference, as Laidlaw observes, is a distinctive way of being indistinct. A range of practices and relationships through which a given community *participates* in public culture of India does so as Jains, Sikhs etc producing and reproducing simultaneously a sense of cultural distinctiveness. *Separateness is maintained through acts of inclusion*. This means that it makes no sense to think of the Buddhist, Jain or the Sikh community as a separate part of the Indic society. It is, rather, a way of being within it. In the words of Laidlaw, '... the boundaries in the Indic society have the curious quality of a two-way mirror: the Jains or Sikhs can see that they are there, and can see out; though those on the other side can easily be misled into thinking that there is nothing inside to see' (Laidlaw 1995: 95).

Following Rodney Needham Indic communities may be profitably viewed as an example of 'polythetic' grouping (an example borrowed from natural sciences), which places together organisms that have the greatest number of shared feature. But no single feature is either essential to group membership or is sufficient to make an organism a member of the group (cited in Cort 2001: 187–188). Michel Carrithers has coined the term polytropy to refer to the dominant themes of fluidity and eclecticism of Indic religious life. He was intrigued to observe that when in distress or in need of help, many Indians turn to persons; not impersonal or natural powers. To explain this predilection, he proposes a concept which he derives from the Greek *polytropy: poly*, 'many,' and *tropos*, 'turning.' *Polytropy* captures, he believes, the sense in which Indians turn toward multiple sources for their spiritual sustenance, hope, relief, or defense. He finds such cosmopolitanism in social and spiritual relations to be the norm, rather than the exception. In the multitudinous social setting of India, any individual or family may remain in a continuous communion with a host of human associates, deities, holy men and women. *Polytropy* thus promotes cosmopolitanism in social and religious terms. It even performs a therapeutic and fruitful task similar to that of cultural anthropology (Carrithers 2000: 831–861).

In light of the above discussion it should be clear how Udham Sigh could have adopted for himself a *nom de guerre* of Ram Muhammad Singh (note the *mélange* of names, Ram and Muhammad that serve as distinct 'markers' of Hindu and Muslim identity respectively) appending it to his family name of Azad or 'Free' which is commonly associated with the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh religious communities. When the casket containing Udham Singh's physical remains was eventually returned to India by the British, it was brought to Sunam on July 31, 1974 where they were cremated with full state honors. On August 2, 1994 a Sikh *granthi*, a Brahmin *pandit*, and Muslim *mullah* performed his final rites. His ashes were placed in seven urns three of which were sent to sacred sites associated with Punjab's three major religious traditions (Haridwar, Kiratpur Sahib, and Rauza Sharif, Sirhind) (Fenech 2002: 837). Patricia Uberoi lists instances in Indic calendar art where the Sikh Gurus (Nanak or Gobind Singh) are put into metonymic conjunction with Śiva, Rāma or Viṣṇu with sometimes the Hindu deity, sometimes the Sikh Guru, occupying the central position. Read dialectically, argues Uberoi, a sort of equivalence [or perhaps correspondence as indicated by the concept of *bandhutā* introduced earlier] is asserted, such that any one figure can stand for the other, according to the devotee's personal preference and commitment (Uberoi 2002: 220).

Indologists and scholars must stop identifying a given Indic religion as a reified body of doctrine that is essentially unchanging over time. Indic culture and religions constitute the sum total of the practices and beliefs of all Indians who called themselves Jain etc. throughout centuries, as revealed in texts, inscriptions, images, buildings, paintings, and other historical records–in sum, what Wilfred Cantwell Smith has termed a ‘cumulative tradition.’ Following John Cort one may call for a fluid and less sectarian model for understanding what has been happening in India since ancient times, a model that will allow us to make more sense of the archaeological, inscriptional, and literary evidence. Cāturdharmya, I submit, has potential to contribute to the creation of such a model.

Concluding Remarks

The concern of the foregoing discussion has been to demonstrate that the innate ‘quaternity’ of Dharma co-exists with the equally innate ‘individualizing’ process. The pluralizing process innate in Dharma makes room for multiple modes of discourse and multiple forms of expressing and practicing Dharma. Dharma (like Madhva’s notion of *brahman*) is *defined* by such multiplicity. Followers of Indic dharmas must overcome the tendency to treat the Four as separable entities that can be described and understood in isolation from one another. One way to overcome this challenge and danger is to promote the language of mutual co-inherence (*circumincessio*), which would describe the Four as indwelling and interpenetrating one another so that we cannot intelligibly speak of one without involving, at least implicitly, the other three as well. Dharmic quaternity cannot be located on a spectrum from oneness to difference. In Dharma, *there is no such spectrum*–because unity and difference are not mutually exclusive, nor even contrastive. Rather, they interpenetrate one another in ways that may confound certainties typically assumed in mathematics.

Notes

[1] *[E]kasminnapi dŗşye‘rthe darśanam bhidyate pŗthak kālāntareņa caiko‘pi tam paśyatyanyathā punah* (*Vākyapadīyam*, Vākyakāņḑam # 136).

[2] Etymologically, Dharma may be traced to the root *dhŗñ* (*dhāraņe)* ‘to hold’ with the suffix *man* (*Uņādi Sūtra* 1:40). Yāska too traces it to the same root (9:25; *dhārayitāram*). Dharma is cognate with Indo-European *dher = to hold, Avestan *daen* and *dar* ([to hold’), and New Persian *dīn* (religion) (see Verma, 1992: 300 fn 1, 2).

[3] According to Jan Gonda, along with *karman* and *samsāra, dharma* constitutes one complex, *one* ideological system (Halbfass, 1990: 322).

[4] A gerundive is formed by the addition to the root of any of three suffixes: *ya, anīya, tavya*. As a gerundive based on *dhŗ*(10th class or *gaņa*), *dharmyam* can be derived from Pāņini’s rule “*dharmapathyarthanyāyādanapete*” (4:4.92). *Dharmyam* is that which does not deviate from Dharma; but is rather conducive to it (i.e., *dharmānukūlam*).

[5] This line of interpretation in based on Berling 1980: 268, n. 11j.

[6] *. . .yato va imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat prayantyabhisamviśanti tad vijijñāsasva tad brahmeti* (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3:1.1).
[7] Madhva bases this line of interpretation on the principle of *upalakṣaṇa* (inclusion by implication) by establishing a bond (*bandhutā*) of *samanvaya* between *brahman* and ānandamaya kośa (the sheath of *ānanda*). Next, by implication he establishes the same type of relation of *brahman* with annamaya, prāṇamaya, manomaya, and vijñānamaya *kośas*. He interprets ānandmaya to mean 'full of bliss' (*pracurya*); not 'modified by bliss' (*vikāra*). By implication (*upalakṣaṇa*), annamaya would mean the source of all sustenance; prāṇamaya, the source of universal energy and so on. Madhva then concludes that it is Viṣṇu (as *brahman*) that pervades and animates the entire creation through the five-fold energy encased in the five sheaths. The bond of *brahman* to the five sheaths is that of container/contained (*ādhāra/adheya*) (see Madhva on Ānandmayādhikaraṇa in *Brahmasūtra* 1:1.12–19; Sharma, 1971: 1284).
[8] The constantly repeated refrain in early Buddhist texts is "*Ayam ettha dhammatā.*" Rhys Davids renders it as "That, in such a case, is the rule,' the Norm, the natural order of things, according to the reign of law in the moral and physical world." She further adds that the early Buddhists believed this doctrine to have been pre-Buddhistic (1959: 1).
[9] *Dharmo na paṭhitena bhavati dharmo na pustakapichikābhyām dharmo na maṭhapraveśena dharmo na mastakaluňchitena ragadveṣau parihṛtya ya ātmani vasati sa dharmo'pi jinokto yah pancamagatim nayati* (*Yogasāra 47: 84*; Raghavan, 1974: 227).
[10] In his later public life and mission, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), chiefly responsible for drafting of the constitution of independent India and a champion of human rights, consistently employed the term Dharma with this integrative and differentiating potential in mind while addressing the composite civilization of multi-religious India.
[11] The peculiar nature of this relationship may be understood in light of the traditional discussion about whether a word/concept denotes an individual object or a generic property. The oldest systematic account of this discussion is found in Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya on Pāṇini 1:2.64 (*Sarūpāṇām ekaśeṣa ekavibahkatau*) (Scharf, 1996: 2). In their extended discussions concerning the denotation of class terms, Kātyāyana and Patañjali use the term *ākṛti* to mean a class property and the term *dravya* to mean an individual object (Scharf 1996: 38). Under Pāṇini 1:2.64, Patañjali discusses three prevalent views of the denotation of generic terms: (1) a generic term denotes an individual substance; (2) it denotes a generic property; (3) it denotes both. He accepts the third proposition and maintains that a generic term denotes both a generic property as well as an individual substance. The generic property included in the meaning accounts for the same cognition with respect to all individual substances of a kind. Being the semantic condition for the use of a single base, it allows general statements to apply repeatedly to different individuals. Thus, either a generic property [Dharma] or an individual substance [dharma] may remain principal in a given proposition, the other being subordinate depending on whether the speaker intends a particular individual or intends the statement to apply generally. Only the context and purpose of the proposition will help to determine what the speaker's intention is (this discussion is based on Scharf 1996: 85, 87–89; see also Patañjali's *vārttika* # 7 on Pāṇini 1:2.58).
[12] See Bardwell Smith (1972: 79).
[13] *Rāga* Ramakali, for instance, was used to reach out to those who belonged to the Nātha Sampradāya and Siri was used to reach out to the Vaiṣṇavas. Popular folk tunes were employed to appeal the rural people (Pashaura Singh, 2000: 149). While preparing the first canonical text of the Granth in 1604, Arjan also established the sequence of the rāgas after reworking on a number of early traditions. Pashaura Singh believes that he may have been inspired by the system developed in *Bṛhaddeśī* a musical treatise dating from late first millennium and attributed to Sage Matanga (2000: 138).
[14] Harjot Oberoi (1994) has argued that Sikhism is being so constructed by projecting Hinduism (particularly the ritual culture of the adherents of 'popular' forms of Hinduism) as the selected 'other.' Despite the very real congruence in belief and practice among Hinduism and Sikhism, modern scholarship is clearly intent to assert a fundamental difference between them.
[15] Consider this statement in light of Kumārila's observation that two distinct natures, sameness (*sāmānya*) and difference (*viśeṣa*) are required to account for two types of cognition in all things, one which identifies an object with others (*anugama*) and one which differentiates an object from others (*vyavṛtti*) (Scharf, 1996: 205). By being similar to one individual falcon altar, for instance, it would not

fail to be similar to any other. Kumārila's point is that the altar need not be more similar to one individual than to another. It should be similar just to that element which is common to all individuals. In that sense it is similar to the generic property not an individual (Scharf 1996: 218–219). By analogy one may state that one dharma differs from the three others because it differs from the rest in some respects. At the same time, however, each is similar to every other in the class called Dharma they all share in. It is precisely this similarity which the class property captures.

[16] *[Ś]rūyatām dharmasarvasvam yad uktam śāstrakoṭibhih paropakārah puṇyāya pāpāya parapīdanam* (*Vikramacarita* 13:2)· The Jain version appears in the *Kathāratnākara* of Hemavijaya: *Ślokārdhena pravakṣyāmi yaduktam granthakoṭibhih paropakārah puṇyāya pāpāya parapīdanam* (5: 125.4) (see Sternbach, 1974: 164).

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Psychological Growth and Heroic Steadfastness in the *Mahābhārata*

Aditya Adarkar

Transcending the Oedipal Paradigm

Why do we *need* to read Sanskrit epic? What can the study of a Sanskrit epic figure like Karṇa teach us? Indeed, what can such a character study have to say to scholars and students who are interested in literature or the humanities in general? In its weak form, a response to this question, or to the call to comparative studies in general, only *suggests* that scholars *can* draw upon works from the non-western tradition, especially when such works happen to be in dialogue with the western works. This reply lacks necessity; or to put it less derogatively, it does not force comparitivism on all scholars. The stronger response to this question asserts that scholars *must* consult works from all traditions, like Sanskrit epic, before making claims about the ways a particular issue (say the mind body problem or human psychology) has been addressed through history. That is the form of response this chapter hopes to evoke.

In particular, I propose a framework for understanding the heroic archetype through a new model which should be taken into account within any hermeneutical method for interpreting the heroic that claims universality. Inspired by the short-lived but wonderful debate between A. K. Ramanujan and Robert Goldman on whether and whither the Indian Oedipus, this chapter examines in detail the life of Karṇa from the *Mahābhārata*. This case proves itself to be an important exception to Otto Rank's cross-cultural heroic paradigm, a paradigm that influenced Sigmund Freud's writings on *Oedipus*. The Karṇa narrative centers on, not an Oedipal complex, but a tension between loyalty (to family) and duties prescribed by dharma. Moreover, Karṇa's character develops not by rejecting a previous identity but clinging to it. Instead of following the Freudian model of individual growth through change, the *Mahābhārata*'s Karṇa seems to manifest his psychological growth through heroic steadfastness (*dhīratā*). Thus in the psychological paradigm implicit in the Karṇa narrative, when individuals "apprehend" their "destiny," they do not need to forsake all else in fulfilling that "dream." We find here a different response to the question of growth and change, and implicitly, a different theory of what it

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means to grow psychologically. Growth through steadfastness is conceptualized, in the Karna narrative, as loyalty both to one's own personal history and the people who inhabit it.[1]

It is possible to use this analysis to expand our vocabulary of psychological paradigms (or perhaps to explode a paradigm altogether) and, surprisingly, to help us better understand the subtleties and dimensions of Hindu *bhakti*[2] "devotion." Many aspects of the suffering strand of the *bhakti* tradition are also interwoven into the Karṇa narrative. For example, just as he explicitly lives as a "disguised" kṣatriya, Karṇa implicitly lives as a "disguised" *bhakta*. When we apply the model of Karṇa's psychological growth to the *bhakti* poets, we see a kind of growth based on dharmic devotion and love for their divine beloved. In such devotion, and perhaps even in the transcendence of the self, there is a particular kind of individual development that captures both the unique humanity expressed in these poems as well as the active and heroic maturing of the poet-saints.

Complementary, not Competing[3] Methodologies

A study that crosses cultural boundaries, however, may evoke some methodological suspicion, and I want to briefly address this at the outset. Where a theory or a story "shares some meanings"[4] with some element of the Karṇa narrative, I hope to exploit that convergence to discover some subtlety of the narrative. The optimism, though, that such a sharing can be both illuminating and scholarly responsible, I borrow from Wendy Doniger, who writes, "we must search for something essential but not essentialist."[5] Similarly, through the following analyses, I hope to use cross-cultural comparisons without having to make (or imply) universalist claims. Following Doniger, I believe that

> ...the universalism of most systems of comparison can [...] be avoided. The great universalist theories were constructed from the top down: that is, they assumed certain continuities about broad concepts such as sacrifice, or a High God, and an Oedipal complex; but these continuities necessarily involved cognitive and cultural factors that, it seems to me, are the least likely places in which to look for cross-cultural continuities. The method that I am advocating is, by contrast, constructed from the bottom up. It assumes certain continuities not about overarching human universals but about particular narrative details concerning the body, sexual desire, procreation, parenting, pain, and death, details which though unable to avoid mediation by culture entirely, are at least *less* culturally mediated than the broader conceptual categories of the universalists.[6]

In what follows, I will exploit some cross-cultural continuities to help us appreciate the subtleties of the Karṇa narrative. Psychological paradigms will thus not be used to delimit the myth; rather, it is at the moments when the Karṇa narrative stretches these paradigms (when it both participates in the conversation and longs to break free of it) that both the narrative and the paradigms will best illuminate each other.

Alf Hiltebeitel, among others, has pointed out that the characters in the epic do indeed possess "as complex a psychology as one could wish."[7] Here I am attempting to fulfill such a "wish;" that is, to attempt to fill out one aspect of Karṇa's psychology.

Karṇa, as a character from the South Asian tradition, has more then just a *different* psychology. That is to say, I do not wish to hold up Karṇa as an exemplar of some sort of exoticized psychology, an aberrant data point on the chart of psychological paradigms. Rather, I want to show that Karṇa is (already) part of the (admittedly Western) psychological discourse, and that the Karṇa narrative stands out from that discourse, as a case study with much to contribute to the discourse. In other words, it is not just that the character of Karṇa is not psychologically naïve; I want to show here that the character of Karṇa is psychologically instructive; to use Gadamer's phrase, Karṇa will broaden our "horizon" of understanding of human psychology. And although Karṇa has been overlooked as a "hero" type for centuries, though well-loved and well-praised, the character study of Karṇa, I hope to show, has much to contribute to both Sanskrit and Western discussions and will expand all of our visions of human psycho-emotional possibility. In particular Karṇa's choice highlights for us the value of "heroic steadfastness" – a mouthful in English which is captured by the Sanskrit term *dhīratā*.

The Epic's Karṇa Narrative

To understand this choice, we need to see Karṇa's biography from *his* point of view. Karṇa is the son of a charioteer couple, and thus, in the social system of the epic, a *sūta*, a member of one of the lower jātis "castes" of society. Crucially, Karṇa is not a member, by dint of his parents, of the kṣatriya varṇa "the aristocratic warrior class." Moreover, the sūta caste that Karṇa does belong to is not merely low, it is a pratiloma "against the grain" caste.[8]

At the same time, the epic's audience knows that, biologically speaking, Karṇa is born from the union of an unmarried woman named Kuntī (who belongs to the aristocratic warrior (*kṣatriya*) class) and Sūrya, the sun god. Karṇa is born with golden earrings and impenetrable golden body armor; his feet are identical to his mother's. To hide the fact that she had a child before marriage, Kuntī abandons the baby in the Aśva river, where he is picked up, adopted, and raised lovingly by Adhiratha and Rādhā, the charioteer (*sūta*) couple.

As Karṇa grows up, he develops incredible military skills, and, at the same time, becomes bitterly resentful of caste and class prejudice, of the prejudice against his sūta-ness. These two tendencies converge when he enters a military tournament, a festival intended to celebrate the end of the military training of the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava princes, two groups related by blood but divided by bitter hatred. The tournament has proceeded quite far when Karṇa arrives; in fact, the champion of the tournament, the middle Pāṇḍava Arjuna, is about to be crowned. Karṇa enters the arena and his very presence causes a stir. Karṇa then reduplicates all of Arjuna's feats one by one. There is one thing left then, to challenge and defeat Arjuna in one-on-one combat.

Just as Arjuna and Karṇa prepare to fight, the plot takes a fateful twist: Kṛpa, an instructor of the princes, asks Karṇa, "what is your *kṣatriya* lineage?" Karṇa can

only hang his head. Then, in a surprising turn, Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava brothers, steps forward and *makes* Karṇa a *kṣatriya*,[9] so quieting any objection to the battle between Karṇa and Arjuna. (Karṇa is thenceforth gratefully loyal to Duryodhana.) At just that moment, Karṇa's father, the charioteer Adhiratha, enters the arena. (Perhaps someone has run to tell him that his son has become a king.) And Karṇa, without hesitation, bows down to his father to show him respect. And this causes a pandemonium both among the contestants and the crowd – there are jeering comments at Karṇa, there are cries of support – but the net result is that the tournament breaks down and the battle between Arjuna and Karṇa is postponed. The Pāṇḍavas themselves taunt Karṇa; for instance, when Bhīma sees Karṇa bowing to his father Adhiratha, he sneers "you [had] better stick to the whip that suits your family." (1.127.5)

Karṇa never forgives the Pāṇḍavas for the taunts, and, in the years that follow, Karṇa's anger and envy at the Pāṇḍavas only deepens and grows.[10] It becomes one of his life's goal to defeat Arjuna. This brings us to the point where Kṛṣṇa approaches Karṇa just before the war. Kṛṣṇa begins by revealing to Karṇa that he is a brother to the Pāṇḍavas. He has been adopted by the sūta family, but he was born to Kuntī, the same mother the Pāṇḍavas share.[11] If Karṇa is indeed their eldest brother, he can, if he claims that position, be immediately crowned king of the entire realm: both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas would serve him, and he would even enjoy the Pāṇḍavas' common wife! Kṛṣṇa leaves unsaid that the Kauravas would not dare to challenge the Pāṇḍavas without Karṇa. Karṇa responds that his father Adhiratha took him in out of *love* and that his mother Rādhā suckled him out of *love* as well. Moreover, it would be disgraceful, Karṇa feels, to abandon a king (Duryodhana) who has given him shelter and privilege for many years.

Karṇa then makes an [amazing] request: Kṛṣṇa should not let anyone know that Karṇa is Kuntī's son in order that the *Pāṇḍava* Yudhiṣṭhira become king.[12] Kṛṣṇa responds that he is amazed that Karṇa is not tempted by the offer of a kingdom. Nevertheless, the war has been fated long ago, and the war will take place to herald in the Fourth Epoch (the Kali Yuga) the most decadent and decrepit epoch of human existence.

The decision that Karṇa makes as he speaks is a very conscious and deliberate one. It is a difficult decision made, as the involvement of the speeches suggest, with a great deal of care, tact, and self-consciousness. We should not be tempted into believing that because Karṇa rejects Kṛṣṇa's advice there is something naïve about his view of the world, something he simply does not understand.

Karṇa's biological mother, Kuntī, now approaches Karṇa, reveals herself as his mother, and also attempts to bring him to the Pāṇḍava side. Sūrya verifies Kuntī's words and encourages Karṇa to follow her advice. But "Karṇa's mind did not falter, for he stood fast by the truth."[13] As he had with Kṛṣṇa, Karṇa reiterates that he must stay his course out of loyalty.

When the battle comes, Karṇa enters the fray late, fights well, and, as he has promised Kuntī, does defeat and spare the lives of her sons, leaving Yudhiṣṭhira particularly humiliated. When Ghaṭotkaca, the son of the Pāṇḍava Bhīma, threatens to destroy the Kaurava side, Duryodhana asks Karṇa to use his infallible weapon on

Ghaṭotkaca; Karṇa does so, knowing that weapon was his only sure way to defeat Arjuna. When Arjuna and Karṇa finally meet, their duel is at first long and inconclusive. At one point, Karṇa fires an arrow which is really a snake that escaped from a forest that Arjuna had burnt down. Kṛṣṇa, acting as Arjuna's charioteer, lowers the ground beneath Arjuna's chariot, and the snake arrow only dislodges Arjuna's diadem. The snake arrow returns to Karṇa and asks to be fired again; but Karṇa, true to the kṣatriya rule never to refire a weapon, declines the offer. Eventually, Karṇa's chariot wheel does get stuck in the mud, and from that position he asks Arjuna to provide him time to release his chariot – again as stipulated by the kṣatriya code. At that point, Karṇa also loses all his knowledge of weapons and is rendered defenseless. Encouraged by Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna kills Karṇa.[14]

A Rankian Analysis of the Karṇa Narrative

With this narrative in hand, we can examine the Karṇa narrative through the lens of Otto Rank's influential 1909 essay "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." I have chosen to use Rank as the spingboard for this analysis because he was the first to realize that the Karṇa narrative fits into a more general pattern of hero myths. Moreover, students of "the hero" paid little attention to Karṇa after Rank; for example, Lord Raglan ignores Karṇa in his 1936 study of "The Hero." Freud himself recognized Karṇa and wrote about him in *Moses and Monotheism*. Since *Moses* is much later than Rank's essay, it seems likely that Freud learned of Karṇa from Rank.

First a little background on Rank's perspective on myth: Rank wished to analyze myths as products of the human imagination, an imagination that was implicitly universal. In this way, Rank hoped to dispel theories that myth formation was based on allegories of natural phenomena or on migration patterns and cultural borrowings.

Rank's motivation to do so was partly Freudian. Since Rank believed that myths were products of a universal imagination, any individual's particular moral disapproval at a myth was evidence of its power, and thus of the myth's authenticity as an uncensored product of the imagination.[15] Thus, when Max Müller would like to interpret incest or parricide myths as reflections of (and on) natural phenomena, Rank disagrees and argues that such interpretations do nothing more than obscure the myths.[16] To Rank, Müller's attempts to "bestow the myths with dignity" lack the power to do justice to all the important elements of the story. (We shall see an example of this in the generalized hero narrative below.)

Rank explicitly contrasts Freud's interpretation of the Oedipus myth with that of Ignaz Goldhizer. By casting Oedipus "as the solar hero who destroys his progenitor, the darkness,"[17] Goldhizer creates an interpretation which is more "soothing" than Freud's famous interpretation in the *Interpretation of Dreams*. But Rank, like Freud, is unwilling to accept the argument that the more censored explanation is the more scientific; to Rank, the aspects of the myths that strike at the subconscious are the most telling. (We shall return to this issue below when we assess the controversy over the role of the Oedipus complex in South Asian psychology.)

Nonetheless, while Rank and Freud do not shy away from the sexual, they both wish to eliminate the gods from their stories. (Wendy Doniger has called Freud the great euhemerist of our time.) This plays into the variant of the Karṇa narrative that Rank chooses to analyze; it comes from Lassen's emphatically euhemeristic 1846 rendition of the *Mahābhārata*. For example, when Kuntī tells Karṇa of his biological birth, Karṇa becomes a *rationalist* and rejects Kuntī's story along rationalist lines, for being implausible!

In the variant of the Karṇa narrative which Rank examines,[18] Karṇa is born and raised in the way we have seen earlier. When Karṇa arrives at the tournament and challenges Arjuna, Kuntī recognizes him. Instead of fainting (as the critical edition tells it), the Kuntī of Rank's variant approaches Karṇa and reveals herself as his biological mother. Again, Kuntī acts (at least partially) out of fear that Karṇa may injure Arjuna. Karṇa considers Kuntī's revelation "a fantastic tale" and refuses to stop fighting. Then, in Rank's variant, Karṇa is allowed to fight and indeed dies at the tournament, defeated by Arjuna.[19]

Given this narrative, Rank notices that many of its elements, and its overall structure, fit very well into a general pattern that the birth and life of many heroes follow. Rank formulates the pattern as follows:

> The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by a humble woman. After he has grown up he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors.[20]

The birth of the heroes Paris, Perseus, Oedipus, and Cyrus are all examples of births that fit this pattern.[21] Often there is a prophecy accompanying the birth of the son that the son will destroy the city or kill the father. In general, every hero becomes famous, attains high rank, and, often, becomes king. This is the pattern, for instance, of the lives of Cyrus and Hercules.[22]

As we shall see, the Karṇa narrative does diverge significantly from this pattern. Lord Raglan expanded Rank's pattern into a checklist of 22 items. Lord Raglan's list seems particularly suited to Oedipus, who receives a score of "21."[23] As we have noted, Lord Raglan skips over Karṇa; by my calculations, Karṇa scores a "9", a low score but not lower than other heroes which Lord Raglan does consider (e.g. Elijah). My point is only that even though the divergences are multiple, the connection to the general pattern is striking. And, as I shall try to demonstrate below, even the divergences are instructive.

Finally, in terms of appreciating the artistry of the *Mahābhārata* as a literary creation, it is interesting to see how its authors crafted a story that seems to begin by playing along with the pattern, and then turns the pattern on its head. A story that follows a conventional plot satisfies in a particular way (e.g. the boy and the

girl live happily ever after) but unconventional plots also challenge and intrigue us (e.g. *Madame Bovary*). It takes a great deal of artistry to turn a conventional plot on its head: the authors have to create a *new* plot and carefully work out all its ramifications.

Nevertheless, to claim as much, we will first have to examine the claim that the pattern that Rank proposes is indeed universal, or even cross-cultural. To this end, we will need to discuss of Rank's methodology.

A student of Freud, Rank formed his key to unlocking the structure of this hero pattern by "analogizing the ego of the child with the hero of the myth."[24] As in the Freudian model of early childhood development, the male child[25] is jealous of his father; he thus constructs a fantasy in which he kills his father, and is justified in doing so. To this end, the child invents a hostile father, a father that neglects the child, abandons him, or exposes him to the elements. The father's plan is foiled, however, since the child survives, and returns to eventually kill and supplant his father. (Freud termed this plot *the family romance*.) "Thus the fantasy of the family romance is simply realized in the myth... The hostility of the father, and the resulting exposure, accentuate the motive which has caused the ego to indulge in the entire fiction."[26]

This fantasy can be framed and interpreted in two ways, depending on who the parents the child is currently living with are perceived to be. In the first interpretation, this fantasy is based on a child who perceives he is neglected:

> The creative influence of this tendency to represent the parents as the first and most powerful opponents of the hero will be appreciated when it is kept in mind that the entire family romance in general owes its origin to the feeling of being neglected – namely, the assumed hostility of the parents.[27]

In the fantasy, then, he imagines that he is, on the one hand, raised by loving parents, and, on the other hand, justified in killing his biological parent. Moreover, killing the biological parents does not in any way disinherit him: his abilities and his right to social and political power are his by birth, and he assumes them once he *realizes* his true identity.

In the second interpretation, the family romance is the fantasy of the neglected child who wishes his parents were someone else. That is, that the child's fantasy is that his current parents are adopted and that he needs to leave them and their socioeconomic class and return to his rightful place at the pinnacle of society. In this fantasy, the child's parents are unworthy of him and he must leave them since they are inappropriate and inauthentic (in the sense that they are not his biological parents). Thus the child invents a fantasy in which he leaves both the parents that raised him *and* his biological parents in order to take up power for himself. In this second scenario, it is not jealousy per se of the father which is central; it is, rather, embarrassment at the parents which motivates the fantasy.

Crucial to our purposes is that idea that heroism can be reformulated – that is to say, *interpreted* – as a psychological phenomenon. Thus the elements in the story (such as the violence) can be interpreted in psychological terms (abandonment,

betrayal, etc). Moreover, the psychological approach can do more than just explain why the story is told as it is; it can explain the motivation behind certain symbols which cannot be explained by natural phenomena or cultural borrowing. Rank's example is the water imagery in the hero narrative; for example, Karṇa is placed into the Aśva river. This cannot be explained in terms of astral imagery or by migration explanations. Water is a birth symbol in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*,[28] and thus an appropriate symbol for the "second birth" of the child in the family of his adopted parents. Similarly, the basket is a womb and so the baby's trip down the river in a basket is a symbol of rebirth.[29]

This provides us with a methodological comparison. In a mythological analysis of Karṇa's birth, we might emphasize that the Aśva River is a remnant of the solar myth of a horse-mother.[30] Here, the other half of this same symbol can be analyzed (in an equally totalizing way) outside of that intertextual mythological context. This alerts us to a characteristic of the *Mahābhārata*: its plot elements are often overdetermined. Moreover, just as within the epic there are often several complete (and independent) explanations for one event (e.g. for why Draupadī is married to all five Pāṇḍavas), we will find complete (and independent) interpretations of the epic as we examine it – one of the reasons why the epic constantly rewards rereading.

Now our Rankian analysis proceeds as follows: once again following Freud, for Rank the essential moment in the hero narrative comes when the hero makes a break with his parents. Let us examine the essential point for Rank, Karṇa's decision with respect to his mother. This break represents a crucial moment to Freud and his followers. Paraphrasing Freud, Rank writes:

> The detachment of the growing individual from the authority of the parents is one of the most necessary, but also one of the most painful achievements of evolution. It is absolutely necessary for this detachment to take place, and it may be assumed that all normal grown individuals have accomplished it to a certain extent.[31]

For example, as Cyrus moves upwards socially, "he constantly removes, as it were, the last traces of his ascent."[32] This illustrates Freud's point – and provides a stark contrast to Karṇa's psychological trajectory.

And lest we think that this point above is a relatively weak claim, Freudian theory goes on to claim that "social progress is essentially based upon this opposition between the two generations."[33] Thus this break with the parents becomes the key to both personal development and social amelioration. Interesting then how Rank does include Karṇa, but how later Karṇa is conveniently forgotten from this discourse!

This emphasis on the break with one's parents is, of course, central to the Karṇa narrative. But it is central in an interesting way, and its difference from the Freudian tradition is not a simple opposition. Karṇa can be seen as both breaking away and remaining loyal: *by being loyal to his adopted parents, he breaks away from his biological parents*. If, as Rank claims, the pattern of the hero is universal, then the authors of this epic narrative seem almost to be playing with the psychological prototype: they have composed a story which simultaneously confirms and refutes it! It is like a poem that leaves the philosopher alternately delighted and perplexed; it is the poetry of either/or.

However, it may not be that the authors are playing in this way: what if the Freudian/Rankian prototype were *not* universal? In that case, then perhaps the Karṇa narrative represents something deep and personal about the psyche of the authors, about *their* collective imagination.[34]

In any case, the poignancy of Karṇa's break with his biological mother is certainly highlighted by Freud's observation. Repeatedly, readers (of all times, for whatever reason) expect Karṇa to abandon his (adopted) parents, and to take the kingdom for himself. In the Sanskrit tradition, a *bhakta* would say that Karṇa should listen to Kṛṣṇa. A conventional *dharmaśāstra* reader would say that Karṇa should obey his mother since conventional dharma (which privileges nature) would consider Kuntī his mother. And Freud would say that making a break with his perceived (thus adopted) parents would make Karṇa into his own individual and help society – which is what *would* happen in a conventional reading of the Karṇa narrative as well.[35] If Karṇa were to accept himself as Kuntī's son, Karṇa would, according to the temptations of Kuntī and Kṛṣṇa, *both* become king *and* prevent the war. (We shall see below that such a reading is misguided.)

At this point, however, let us reflect briefly on what exactly Kṛṣṇa's and Kuntī's temptations mean to Karṇa. Both the brutality of Kṛṣṇa's request, and the corresponding horror of Kuntī's attempt, indicate a point of view in which Karṇa as an individual is not of much account. It is partially that which has made him a hero to the socially dispossessed. In the context of a kṣatriya framework, as Karṇa himself says, his world is not simply a world of *power*. It is a world also of social relations – his love for his parents (who will do their funeral rites?) and his duty to Duryodhana (who helped him when he was a "nobody"?). Being Adhiratha and Rādhā's child is part of his identity and he owes his loyalty to them based on love.

A radically separated individual is not in a desirable state in the *Mahābhārata*. Indeed, if an individual is all alone, the individual would be left with nothing but power.[36] This is what the characters neither desire nor even consider as an option. It not unrelated to Yudhiṣṭhira's sorrow after the war: if he had lost a brother (Karṇa) then what was the war for? It is also connected to Arjuna's query before the war in the *Bhagavadgītā*:

> I see omens of chaos,
> Kṛṣṇa, I see no good
> in killing my kinsmen
> in battle.
>
> Kṛṣṇa, I seek no victory,
> or kingship or pleasures.
> What us to us are kingship,
> delights, or life itself?
>
> We sought kingship, delights,
> and pleasures for the sake of those
> assembled to abandon their lives
> and fortunes in battle.[37]

The idea of power, of kingship, wealth, and pleasures independent of familial and social relations is indeed horrifying to everyone involved in the war.

This emphasizes that while independence in decision-making can clearly be seen as dharmic if it upholds the overall well being of society, radically disjunctive individualism is not considered dharmic. Consequently, an ideal social framework is one centered on relationality and the willingness to sacrifice – for the right, dharmic reasons. Such reasons go beyond mere obedience, to conventional dharma, family, or the divine, while at the same time reverence for all of these is not lost. And indeed such reasons lie at the heart of the *Rāmāyana*: Rāma goes into exile not in deference to his biological parents' hopes but in defiance of them, because he believes it to be his rightful obligation; and Sitā likewise insists on following him, despite Rāma's reluctance. Along with Karṇa choice, these moments remind us that, contra conventional wisdom, the code of heroic loyalty and self-sacrifice does not hold only for women (such as Sitā) but is equally relevant for men.[38]

This reflection on the psychology of Karṇa's choice helps us understand the poignancy of all the other stories that Rank and Freud talk about as well. For instance, Moses (who like Karṇa, moves socially downwards because of his decision at the moment of "recognition") has the same poignant aspect to his story – Moses believes he is a prince of Egypt, even if he eventually takes his place among the Hebrews. The shift must indeed have been a massive psychological rupture – one which we shall discuss further here, for Karṇa, like Moses, chooses the lowly but loving relationship.

For Rank (and Freud), the ease with which one can abandon one's perceived parents seems to be based on a fantasy (or is it a reality?) of parental neglect.[39] That is, the child imagines that he has been neglected, and that crime excuses his fantasy of rebellion. And this is what the epic authors go to such a great deal of effort to dispel: they set up a hero who has all the features of the hero narrative but they give him parents who adore him – ideal parents in emotional terms: loving, caring, sincere. (The presence of such an ideal father will be discussed further in the section below on family relations.)

As we have seen, there is another urge tied into this adoption fantasy: the child's fantasy that he deserves much more than the social situation he finds himself in, that he is really of noble rank, that he is really a king. Rank writes that the "true hero is the ego itself"[40] and that the first (and perhaps only) heroic act is revolt against the father. Similarly, Freud writes, "as a rule, the pivot for his entire system is simply the culmination of the family romance, in the apodictic statement: I am the emperor (or god)."[41] And indeed this pathological dimension of heroes is not lost on Rank and Freud. Rank finds anarchists and family romance heroes similar[42] and connects both to delusional paranoiacs. Those who *live out* a hero fantasy wind up in jail.[43]

This particular delusion, however, deserves more comment, for it is a delusion that has received much attention, especially in modern, capitalist societies. Gustave Flaubert wrote *Madame Bovary* just as capitalism was transforming French society, and created a heroine whose central mental preoccupation is being someone who she is not. Indeed, Emma Bovary's essence is precisely that fantasizing, a fantasizing that eventually leads to her death. For Flaubert, prevalent as it might be, such a fantasy was untenable in reality. Flaubert was skeptical (at best) of where capitalism was leading France. (In that way, *Madame Bovary* and the *Mahābhārata* are similar:

they both bleakly depict a society in transition, and a society which is, in the authors' opinion, devolving.)

The French philosopher Jules Gaultier[44] popularized the term *bovarysme* and posited that it was at the heart of capitalism, as well as at the heart of what was wrong with capitalism. To Gaultier bovarysme was the faculty that drove individuals to work hard, to compete, to become the people they were not.

> For Gaultier, *bovarysme* was *the faculty of conceiving oneself as other than one is* and as such represented an evolutionarily valuable human possibility. This depends, however, on the stimulation of a *higher* conception of oneself, an aspiration for the better. When the goal aimed at is unobtainable, mere fantasy, *bovarysme* is damaging and ultimately pathological. It is this pejorative sense of the term Gaultier finally stressed and that became current, unsurprisingly given its derivation from Flaubert's novel and the conventional condemnations of Emma.[45]

Thus *bovarysme* could be either a pathological fantasy or the psychological engine of industry, depending on the connection to reality that the "higher conceptions of oneself" maintained.

And indeed when we reflect on the Hindu system of rebirth, we see that it is also driven by such an urge: we act in concord with dharma not just to build a better world but also to be reborn in a better state, or to not be reborn at all. But it is again the same urge: we are perhaps something much more than the state in which we find ourselves at the moment. Whether it is socio-economic or dharmic climbing, a "bovarysme" of sorts pervades both systems.

Again, this is just what is so striking about Karṇa's choice. Here is Karṇa's chance to rise high, to become king, to be the person he was born to be. He does not need to wish in the next life to be a king or better: he can achieve that right now! And yet he refuses. He refuses in order to maintain his own sense of dharma, and – as we shall see below – to maintain his own sense of family relationships. Moreover, as we shall see in our discussion, Karṇa's heroic act is also an act of steadfastness, of steadfast loyalty to his father and mother. Like Emma Bovary, Karṇa can conceive of himself independently of the identity that society has given him; like Emma, Karṇa has the steadfastness to cling to that identity throughout all sorts of external temptations and dangers.

Now Rank, following Freud, feels that the pattern of the fantasy is usually to ennoble the father and accept the biological mother.[46] The Karṇa narrative again works differently: Karṇa accepts his father along with his low rank (at the tournament) and rejects his biological mother along with her high rank. Viewing the scenario thus seems to undermine Freud's assumption that the drives involved in this sphere are sexual, and that sexual competition over the mother is what causes the child to idealize the mother (hence not enlarge her in the fantasy) and compound the threat of the father (hence make him more powerful and justify the rebellion).

From Karṇa's perspective, though, his parents are not individuals with whom he is in competition; they are individuals who give his life meaning and reference. His psychological satisfaction comes from pleasing them and by repaying them with his accomplishments. Recall that when Karṇa is crowned king, he bows to his father when Adhiratha enters the arena. Similarly, when Kṛṣṇa says that the

kingdom will come to him, Karṇa says that he will give it to Duryodhana. It is not the drive to *acquire* power and wealth that drives Karṇa; it the drive to be able to share wealth, riches, and prestige with the people that have cared for him loyally. We might compare this urge to the insight from Mauss[47] (and his followers) that in "potlatch" economies, it is not the accumulation of wealth per se that is important, but rather the ability to give away that wealth in a socially meaningful manner and thereby form social bonds. Moreover, the *Mahābhārata* provides us with an example of what it would mean to have power but no social relations: at the end of the war, Aśvatthāman has a weapon of incredible power but no relatives. Even though he uses the weapon, it gains him nothing, and he spends the rest of his life as a wandering outcast. Whether or not Aśvatthāman has power, without social relations he is essentially excluded from meaningful activity in the epic.

Rank and Freud both emphasize that revenge and retaliation lie at the heart of the child's fantasy's motive.[48] Here they strike a deep chord in the Karṇa narrative: indeed Karṇa *is* full of vengeful hatred, but it is not directed toward his parents. It is certainly not directed towards his adopted parents, and it is also *not* directed towards his biological father Sūrya, whom he worships daily. (More on this below.) Indeed, the character with whom he might be most angry (Kuntī), Karṇa treats rather well. He greets her with honorifics, and he grants her a most lavish gift in response to her most horrifying of demands.

Kuntī's demand is particularly biting to Karṇa because it resonates with the facts that sting him the most: Karṇa is full of vengeful hatred towards those who have humiliated him, the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī. And those are the very people that Kuntī is trying to protect, and doing so with unabashed bias. Just as Karṇa felt it was unfair that society forgave the Pāṇḍavas for the way that they treated him, now, just when his own biological mother reveals herself to him, her first act is a request blatantly biased towards the Pāṇḍavas. *Even then*, Karṇa does not flare up in anger against her, but only quietly refuses her extravagant request and gives her something else extravagant in its place – the lives of all of her sons except Arjuna. And indeed in the war, Karṇa will have the chance to kill all the Pāṇḍavas except Bhīma, but will restrain himself and allow the defeated Pāṇḍavas to escape with their lives.

Karṇa's devotion to both his fathers is profound.[49] To Sūrya, he prays every day until the sun scorches his back. To his father Adhiratha, he sacrifices even the kingship. Rank noticed the tendency of the myth to elevate the father into the greatest of men,[50] and Karṇa seems to demonstrate this with respect to Sūrya. Nevertheless Karṇa does not display the urge to compete with or eliminate – let alone kill – his fathers.

Indeed Karṇa's worship of Sūrya is one of his defining characteristics: if ever there was an anti-oedipal father-son relationship is that of Karṇa and his fathers. The pattern of tension between father and son[51] is replaced in the Karṇa narrative by a pattern of worship without blind adherence. Karṇa prays every day to Sūrya but does not heed his advice.[52] Karṇa will bow down before Adhiratha even when he has become a king; yet Karṇa will not follow Adhiratha in his caste profession. (Karṇa will not "stick to the whip that suits his family."[53]) Karṇa seems to represent another relationship pattern: reverence without subservience.

Equally importantly for the upcoming discussion, his fathers do not feel any urge to kill Karṇa; both of them love and protect him as best they can. Adiratha's love is attested to by Karṇa's affection for him. And Sūrya warns Karṇa when he is being tricked,[54] and encourages him to take over the kingdom.

Familial Relations Gone Awry

Indeed Karṇa's relations with his parents seem to raise the question (at least from Rank's or Freud's perspective) of why Karṇa does not have a jealous father.[55] If Rank is accurate in describing the myth as a creation of the authors' or the collective's imagination, then the question arises as to whether or not the authors of the *Mahābhārata* had the Oedipal impulse in their unconscious. (Certainly, if we follow Freud, they should have this in mind since Freud considers the Oedipal conflict as universal.) This question has been raised and debated by A. K. Ramanujan and Robert Goldman, each of whose arguments we will examine below.

Before turning to Ramanujan's and Goldman's article, I want to clarify the purpose of this discussion: not just to elaborate on the above question but to show that aspects of Karṇa's character (and especially its shadow relationship to Arjuna) can contribute to this debate. Specifically, I want to suggest that Karṇa and Arjuna together represent two sides of the same psychic coin: **on one side is loyalty and adharma; on the other side is disloyalty and dharma**. These two sides are in tension with one another and the heroes seem to flip back and forth between the two sides. I am not addressing here the question of which side of the coin is "better;" rather I want to argue that the psychological motivation for the Karṇa narrative, as well as the stories that Ramanujan and Goldman discuss, can all be interpreted as artistic creations inspired by this psychic tension.

Let us first examine Goldman's position. Goldman strongly opposes the suggestion that there is no trace of the Oedipal complex in Indian literature. He admits that it might be difficult to find, but this is only so because father and mothers, for Goldman, have been displaced onto symbolic substitutes, namely gurus, elder brothers, and brahmins for fathers, and cows (usually) for mothers. The evidence for Goldman's examples rests upon the sort of substitutions that Freud posited happened in dreams. Thus Goldman, like Rank, would like to read the epic's narratives as dream sequence of a Indian collective mind. One striking (and strikingly suspicious) example of this kind of substitution is the all-giving cow (*kāma-dhenu*) for mother. Because the *kāma-dhenu* and a mother are both symbols of fecundity, Goldman feels justified in conflating them. I am not convinced he should: a relationship of fecundity could be fundamentally different from a relationship of sexuality. For example, arguing over a field, is different from arguing over a woman, let alone conflict over a mother. There are specific psycho-developmental relationships that lead to a bond between mother and son (e.g. a breast fixation during the oral stage) which are centrally connected in the Freudian paradigm to the Oedipal complex. Moreover, this is not just any cow, this is a very special cow with very

special powers; Vasiṣṭha's relationship to the cow is not necessarily one of marital attachment – there are myriad other relationships possible. For example, the cow may be part of some conception of a "household" like the Greek *oikos* or the Roman *familia*.[56] The *kāma-dhenu* could be considered part of Vasiṣṭha's "family," just as in medieval Europe when "scapegoats" were tried and hung for misfortunes that fell upon the family. Thus the economic and social bond between the *kāma-dhenu* and Vasiṣṭha may be something other than just sexual.

Moreover, as we shall see below, there are other frameworks that can systematically interpret the tensions that Goldman identifies as Oedipal – thus discounting Goldman's central claim that the Oedipal complex is the *only* way to make sense and significance of the stories he has collected. Finally, even if we did accept Goldman's substitutions, what would such an acceptance mean? Why should we *translate* Hindu myths into Greek molds? If Freudian psychoanalytic theory requires a bedrock in the Oedipal conflict, does a psychoanalytic framework of the South Asian psyche(s) require the *same* bedrock? Or wouldn't any bedrock do?

Goldman's 1978 article was a response to a 1972 article by Ramanujan;[57] Ramanujan in turn responded in a reworked 1983 article.[58] Ramanujan begins by suggesting that "while intergenerational competition (Kluckhohn's phrase, 1959) seems universal, the direction of aggression and desire, and the outcome seem different in different cultures."[59] Armed thus, Ramanujan examines variants of a Kannada story in which a mother marries her son, a story that "expresses a mother's desire and real temptation to cling to her son."[60] Ramanujan places this story in the context of "the great importance of sons to mothers in the politics of the Indian family,[61] the prolonged period of breast-feeding, the practice in many families of sons sleeping next to mothers, almost until they are adolescent."[62] Complicating this family dynamic is the Hindu belief that "fathers are reborn as sons. The rivalry between fathers and sons for the mother is because the mother loves her son and the father is left out."[63] Thus Ramanujan delineates a category of Oedipal tales in India that take place from the mother's perspective.[64]

Later, Ramanujan suggests another angle on the topic, one that seems to have much promise for our analysis. In this story, a son runs away from his family and becomes an ascetic as a response to discovering that his mother is his father's daughter. Ramanujan points out that, "here, as in the Oedipus stories, the emphasis is placed on the resulting confusion of normal kin-relations, especially the conflation of generations (grandfather-father-son-brother) resulting from incestuous relations – and the son's horror at such a discovery."[65] This folktale also suggests the following general *asexual* causal chain: adharmic sex leads to adharmic familial relations, which lead to adharmic power relationships, which lead to dilemmas in which:

(1) loyalty to family; love for family; filial respect are pitted against
(2) dharmic duties (for example, and especially, kṣatriya duties)

(Compare this chain and conflict to that in the *Bhagavadgītā* 1.40. There adharma destroys the family and consequently leads to the dilemma that Arjuna is facing on the battlefield.) Let us see how my modification of the folklore pattern can be applied as an interpretation which runs parallel to Ramanujan's and Goldman's analyses.

Following Goldman, Ramanujan writes: "such figures as Bhīṣma and Rāma [are] ideal sons, [and] 'do constitute the ego ideal for Hindu men.' (Goldman, 1978: 346)"[66] Ramanujan's and Goldman's insight here is crucial, for I want to suggest that the hero's dilemma stems from a conflict between "fulfilling the father" (or in Karna's case both parents) and upholding dharma. The terrible[67] Bhīṣma is an illustrative example: when Bhīṣma gives up his right to the throne in order that his lust-lorn father can be satisfied, Bhīṣma creates a power vacuum which leads eventually to a struggle for succession and the Kurukṣetra war.[68]

In other examples, Ramanujan tells of princesses who will not sleep with their father;[69] Goldman tells of a sage Viśvāmitra whose sons refuse to kill themselves. Both the princesses and the sons use arguments from dharma to defend their actions; both are outraged by their father's request. Viśvāmitra's sons reply:

> How is it, [father], that abandoning your own sons you protect the son of another? We see this as being as forbidden an action as, in the matter of food, the taking of a dog's flesh.[70]

Unlike Bhīṣma's course, the children in these cases choose dharma over filial loyalty, that is, (2) over (1) above.

Where I would like to differ from Ramanujan and Goldman is in their view of the above sort of rejection as unmitigatedly bad. While it may be the case that sons like Bhīṣma and Rāma are held up as examples, the actions of the father (either in desiring to assault his daughters or asking for his sons' lives) are by no means unambiguously morally correct. It takes an amazing leap of cultural relativism to agree with Goldman that "Viśvāmitra's sons . . . are evidently not good sons."[71] Goldman's cites Viśvāmitra's speech back to his sons, a speech which invokes dharma but seems to do so self-servingly and circularly:

> Going against my words, this brazen speech is to be condemned from the standpoint of dharma. It is terrible and makes the hairs of the body stand on end.[72]

I fail to see how this could be read straight-forwardly as an expression of the culture unless one reads overly literally. Much more interesting here is to see (as Goldman himself says elsewhere) the figure of the castrating, terrifying father-figure, wielding power indiscriminately, as well as, the conflict that such a situation has engendered, a conflict in which dharma itself seems to support both sides.

In an even more extreme form of my position, I would argue that Bhīṣma's act of "filial piety" itself is adharmic, as is Arjuna's act of sharing Draupadī with his brothers because Kuntī tells him to do so.[73] A clear sign of the improper nature of Bhīṣma's act is the fact that it has to be explained "away" by an old curse.[74] When Bhīṣma's father Śāṃtanu (indirectly) asks of him that Bhīṣma give up the kingdom so that Śāṃtanu can satisfy his admittedly overpowering lust for a fisher-woman, this is an outrageous request by the standards of the epic and of kṣatriya dharma. Putting a sexual dalliance above the welfare of the kingdom, for example, is the precise opposite of the spirit of dharma that Rāma in the *Rāmāyana* invokes when he puts the welfare of the kingdom above his own wife (and thus banishes Sitā). Thus when Bhīṣma actually honors his father's indirect request, it is indeed a "terrible" thing; it certainly has a kind of nobility about it, but it is by no means a conventional,

or even desirable, course of action. In that sense, I would disagree that the tradition *unequivocally* holds up Bhīṣma as an ideal son.[75]

The pattern that we *do* see is the conflict between familial relations and more general dharmic power-relations. We might express this as the conflict between the domestic and the political, but that I think would be to abstract this too far from the particulars of the stories. Those particularities seem best to be captured by the conflict between (1) and (2) above and the way that such a conflict has been produced by acting on adharmic sexual urges.

The usual response to such a dilemma or conflict is suicide or castration (or symbolic forms thereof). We shall discuss below how important it is that Karṇa does *not* follow either path when confronted with just such a dilemma. In the context of the usual outcomes of these stories, it would seem that for sons, resistance is futile; the usual outcome in these stories is that the son is defeated by the father. A very common pattern is "the aggression of the father towards the son. In all these stories the son willingly gives up (often transfers) his political and sexual potency."[76] (e.g. Bhīṣma.) "Many more instances can be cited of the father-son conflict with the father as victorious aggressor."[77] "In all these cases, we must note that the son never wins, almost never kills the father figure. Where a younger man kills the older, as when Arjuna kills Bhīṣma, it is clear that it is the latter who teaches him a way of doing so. The power of the father-figure is never over-thrown."[78]

Karṇa's and Arjuna's mirroring is significant here because Arjuna seems to be a character who embodies the Oedipal conflict.[79] As Arjuna's arch-enemy, Karṇa is also the character who *refuses* to abandon (symbolically kill) his father. We can thus see Karṇa as the shadow of an oedipal character, and moreover, I would argue that Karṇa's presence and his relationship to Arjuna suggest that both Oedipal and non-Oedipal possibilities are present in the minds of the authors.

Consequently, it seems that the *tension* between Arjuna and Karṇa is at the heart of "the Indian version of the Oedipal complex," or more precisely, at the heart of stories which might otherwise be interpreted as Oedipal. In other words, it is not necessarily only a tension about sexual jealousy. It is a tension of which path to follow in the world: a path in which one is loyal to one's parents but which is adharmic, or a path which is dharmic but involves oedipal killing.

In this way Karṇa and Arjuna together represent a pair of heroes; they represent two sides of the same heroic "coin." Again one side is loyalty and adharma; the other side is disloyalty and dharma. Moreover, it is not clear, in the end, that Arjuna's choice is the better one. The Kali Yuga is a world in which familial and social relations have gone awry and in which dharma does not guide human beings in a straight-forward manner.

At one point, Arjuna even encourages his own son to fight against him. In Arjuna's mind *his* son is loyal to him only if his son fights him, that is, does his duty as a *kṣatriya*, by being loyal to his *svadharma*. So once again, Arjuna contrasts personal loyalty to dharma or *svadharma*.

This contrast is precisely what Karṇa does not do: he conceives of loyalty in terms of human emotions. (These are of course the emotions that Kṛṣṇa dismisses

in the *Bhagavadgītā* 2.11: “You grieve for those beyond grief,/and you speak words of insight;/but learned men do not grieve/for the dead or the living.”[80]) Karṇa, like Viśvāmitra’s sons, also has dharma on his side, but his dharma is intuitive as well as rule-based: just as Viśvāmitra’s sons intuitively and emotionally know that their father’s request is absurd, so Karṇa similarly feels that to be asked to betray his adopted father is not just horrifying but wrong.

Part of the reason that Karṇa feels so strongly about his father as well as his mother is that both his biological and adopted fathers have always supported him. After reading Goldman and Ramanujan’s articles (and perhaps Freud as well), I was tempted to forget that many fathers do support their sons, and indeed that that in itself is a major theme of the *Mahābhārata*. Much of the plot can be said to hinge on Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s support of his son Duryodhana, no matter what Duryodhana chooses to do, and irrespective of whether or not Dhṛtarāṣṭra approves of Duryodhana’s actions. Similarly, Sūrya and Indra both work to help their sons; and Dharma, like Arjuna, tests his son Yudhiṣṭhira. And so on. There are, I would venture to say, many *more* examples of fathers supporting sons (in the *Mahābhārata* at least) than the reverse. And thus, as my model above shows, we could not begin to understand the underlying psychological conflict behind these stories without understanding both sides of “the coin” – that is, both the supportive and the aggressive fathers, both the emotionally attached and the emotionally detached sons, both the calls of dharma and the calls of love.

Courageous Constancy

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud analyzes a character who is slightly different from the Rankian hero prototype, but the paradigm still has great analytical and interpretive power.[81] In fact, it may be that the usefulness of the prototype is to help us see precisely what is so interesting about a particular character – perhaps indeed what we mean when we say that a particular hero is interesting.

Karṇa’s moment to deviate from the hero prototype is when he does not choose to become the eldest Pāṇḍava and king. By not choosing power and fame, Karṇa makes a choice different from, say, that of Achilles in the *Iliad*, who has to choose between a long life and eternal glory. Achilles chooses fame (*kleos*) over time on earth. Karṇa does not have such a choice; in fact, the choice itself is the temptation. Kṛṣṇa wants to seduce Karṇa into thinking that Karṇa has a choice between a full and long life span (if he were to not fight) and a nihilistic future (death, infamy). But in fact the war is inevitable; the Kauravas are dead set against the Pāṇḍavas – if the episode of the dice game teaches us anything, it is that Duryodhana will go to any lengths to destroy the Pāṇḍavas. Moreover, even though Duryodhana says he will not fight without Karṇa, the first eight days of the battle are indeed fought without Karṇa[82] – suggesting that even if Karṇa had decided not to fight, the war would have still taken place. Thus, as Karṇa rightly suspects, the war would go on even if Karṇa were not on the Kaurava side.

Karṇa appears to be acting in a way that is very different from Achilles. Achilles is weighing two options and trading one for the other; Achilles makes an active choice between two paths to follow. In contrast, Karṇa stands his ground. He does not "trade;" rather he refuses to be seduced by the offer of a new identity. Such a difference is crucial for the question of the applicability of Freudian psychology here. For Freud, the self, like a butterfly, has to evolve through stages. This is true not only for infants, but for full-grown individuals; the journey through the stages is the bedrock of the Freudian paradigm. (Thus a trauma which prevented the transition from one stage to another can manifest itself later in life as a pathology and thus need to be revealed by the psychoanalytic process.)

The ability of the self to evolve, to reform itself, lies at the heart of a particular notion of individualism as well; individuals are only truly free if they are able to "become" whatever they want to be. The great test of this is for them to conquer their upbringing by their own choices. Thus the poor boy becomes a concert piano player; the impoverished girl a senator.

In contrast, Karṇa's story provides another angle altogether on development: Karṇa is a character that "develops" not by rejecting a previous identity but by clinging to it. That is, he does not change but remains fixed. The crucial śloka here is 5.144.3:

> And thus addressed by his mother, and by his father the Sun himself, Karṇa's mind did not falter, for he stood fast by the truth. (cacāla naiva Karṇasya matiḥ satya-dhṛtes)

The *bahu-vrīhi* compound *satya-dhṛtiḥ* "he who possesses constancy, steadfastness, resolution with respect to the truth" points to the crucial quality that allows Karṇa to resist the temptation of his biological parents, namely *dhṛti*. Derived from the verbal root *dhṛ*, the noun *dhṛti* has the meanings "holding, seizing, supporting, firmness, constancy, resolution," as well as "satisfaction, contentment, joy." The goddess Dhṛti is the wife of Dharma; she is the goddess of Resolution and Satisfaction. This semantic field is closely related to the semantic field of *dhīratā*, or *dhairya*, nominal forms which are derived from the verbal root *dhṛ* – the root from which the word "dharma" is derived. The marriage of Dharma and Dhṛti on the divine plane points to interrelatedness of the domains of the two derivatives of the verbal root *dhṛ* on the semantic plane, and is an example of the way mythology "encodes" moral and psychological cultural values.

Further *dhīratā* is the noun of the adjective *dhīra*, which has the meanings of: "steady, constant, firm, resolute, brave, energetic, courageous, self-possessed, composed, calm, grave."[83] *Dhairya* has the added nuance of "intelligence, forethought." Thus the semantic field seems to center around both "satisfied resolution" and "considered resolution."[84] I have listed so many translations here and above because I feel that this semantic field (encompassing Dhṛti and Dharma) is essential to understanding both Karṇa's character and the contribution that a study of his character can make towards the exploration of the human psyche. Note, for instance, in our current context, that *dhīratā* conjoins courage and bravery with firmness, resoluteness, and constancy: Karṇa's bravery and courage derive not from his ability to transform

himself (as perhaps Arjuna does in listening to the *Bhagavadgītā*); rather, Karṇa's bravery derives from his constancy, his steadfastness.

Not surprisingly, this adjective *dhīra* is used in Sanskrit literary criticism to describe heroic types. It is combined with other qualities, and these combinations also shed light on the semantic field of *dhīratā*. In the fourteenth century literary treatise SāhityaDarpaṇa composed by the Orissan scholar Viśvanātha Kavirāja, we find:

dhīra-udātta-nayika 'the brave and noble-minded protagonist'
dhīra-uddhata-nayika 'the brave and proud protagonist'
dhīra-praśānta-nayika 'the brave and calm protagonist'
dhīra-lalita-nayika 'the brave protagonist who is also sportive and restless'[85]

Such a typology shows us how this notion of constancy and courage can combine with pride or nobility, or even calmness.

In his early eleventh century literary critical work, the *ŚṛṅgāraPrakāśa* (Light on Passion), Bhoja (in the assessment of Sheldon Pollock) argues that "what makes us call a hero a hero is the fact of his possessing "continuity" or "stability" of character (*dhairyam*)..."[86] Bhoja inherited this category but he went on to expound a theory based on this category with particular clarity and force. Bhoja defined the four kinds of firmness for the four different heroic types, and matched each heroic type with one of the four life goals. Indeed, for Bhoja, "the hero is conceived of as a moral agent, indeed nothing but a moral agent,"[87] and eventually the literature containing the hero becomes "equipment for living."[88]

Perhaps surprising to those of use raised on textual fidelity, Bhoja felt that the way that literature led to a certain type of *vyutpatti* "education in the largest sense" was through a conception of literature in which literature presented a unitary meaning. This entailed, of course, revising literature to fit such a unitary meaning The parts then of the epic in which we do find characters like Karṇa are in a curious relation to later literary traditions. Such parts seem to be either eliminated or incorporated into the unified moral vision, and their contrariness subdued. The *dhīratā* that Karṇa represents will only later become the hallmark of the hero; thus later this *dhīratā* seems to be transferred – perhaps even forced – onto the "winners" of the Kurukṣetra War. *But in the epic*, Karṇa who represents "constancy" is, roughly speaking, in tension with Arjuna who represents change.

A Bhojian analysis might run: "Be like Arjuna, not like Karṇa," because Arjuna obeys Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa does not. Such an analysis shows us precisely how the Karṇa narrative seems to represent an exception to the general literary critical paradigm. Karṇa, the ancient *pratinayika* "anti-hero," embodies the crucial aspect, *dhīratā*, that will characterize future *nayika*s "heros."

Central to Karṇa's character, *dhīratā* in the *Mahābhārata* lies on a spectrum of human virtues which ranges from the individual as infinitely fluid, infinitely flexible to the individual as supremely constant. For the epic as a whole, it seems that all of these virtues are part of the human "horizon" of possibilities; there is not merely *one* virtue that will carry the day. As a literary work, the *Mahābhārata* is interested in playing upon all the different ways in which different aspects of human existence

may be both beautiful and heroic – that is how the different aspects of human existence might give us the courage to live our own lives and make our own decisions.

Moreover, the epic seems also to emphasize the tension between stillness and change and their curious interrelationship. For instance, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, a person whose insight (*prajñā*) is firm and sure (*sthitha*) will eventually become one with Kṛṣṇa. In other words, that person will evolve closer to Kṛṣṇa in successive lives; thus firmness and steadfastness (stillness) lead eventually to (spiritual) development.

The tension between stillness and change takes place in anticipation of the Kali Yuga, the age when dharma is not immediately obvious to an average human being. Thus it becomes especially difficult during such an age to remain *sthitha* "rooted," but the epic authors seem to relish the idea of creating heroic characters who manage (though their steadfastness *dhīratā*) to do just that.[89]

This brings us back to our original question: what can studying the character of Karṇa contribute to a psychoanalytical discussion? As we have seen, there is, within the *Mahābhārata*, a powerful alternative to the Freudian model of individual growth through change. Instead, a character like Karṇa seems to manifest his psychological growth through *dhīratā*, "heroic steadfastness." Whereas Freud would stress in the family romance the importance of breaking with one's past, the Karṇa narrative and *dhīratā* would suggest that a person can grow simply by not being swayed by even the most seductive of external factors.

The Karṇa narrative resonates deeply not only with the oft-told tale of the hero but also with the less frequently expressed anxiety of "being revealed as a fraud," the anxiety of the Emperor's New Clothes. This story is the converse of Rank's prototypical hero narrative: here the protagonists, at the moment of recognition, are exposed as much lower than they believed themselves to be. In the Karṇa narrative, there is indeed such a shaming scene (at the tournament) but it becomes curiously layered over: though "exposed" as a *sūta*, Karṇa "becomes" a *kṣatriya*. It is later, when Kṛṣṇa and Kuntī approach him, that Karṇa is really exposed. And it is at this moment that the Karṇa narrative turns into an account of a different psychological paradigm – a paradigm in which the individual is not developing though discarding identity after identity, but rather surviving through hanging on to a meaningful identity.

The Karṇa psychology thus suggests a paradigm of psychological well-being based on the loving (not antagonistic) relationship between parents and child; it is an exploration of the psychological strength of a child who has been raised by loving parents and a demonstration of how important that bond is to the child. The importance of the bond seems especially crucial if the child charts social territory unknown to the parents; they send the child into that society armed with nothing but (the memory of) their affection.

Such a scenario might resonate not only with socially upwardly mobile academics today (retracing the steps of Hardy's Jude) but with the epic *sūta*s "reciters" themselves. Caught between being the handlers of the whip (they came from the charioteer class) and chanting the epics, between being excluded from the world of kṣatriya deeds and being the repository of fame and memory of those deeds, the *sūta*s might constantly find themselves confronted with the anxiety of being exposed

as a fraud. It is interesting then that their character Karṇa, instead of succumbing to the fantasy of abandoning his *sūta*-ness, clings to it. In that way, the *sūta*s perhaps send a message about psychology and class: for the upper classes, abandoning one's parents and finding one's own identity may indeed be healthy; for other classes, however, remaining heroically and steadfastly loyal to the love inherent in one's social and familial bonds may give one the strength to survive the hardships of an unpredictable and unpredictably unjust fate.

And, in fact, we see this strategy employed not only with respect to class, but in the context of all kinds of oppression. As Rita D. Sherma has written:

> Those that arise from marginality due not only to class but to any oppression (misogyny, racism, colonialism, and so forth), find it more empowering to embrace their origins rather than transcend them – here there is power in the margins and defiance in humility. Gandhi, well-educated, British trained, and internationally experienced, found power and authenticity in discarding the mantle of westernization and putting on the garb of the fakir.

Interpreting *Bhakti* Through *Dhīratā*

Traditionally, critics have looked to the *Bhagavadgītā* as the locus for *bhakti* in the *Mahābhārata*. And indeed this seems like a natural place to look: Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa seem to be the ideal pair of devotee and divinity. And Kṛṣṇa's *prasāda* "grace" bestowed upon Arjuna seems like an ideal moment when the divine presence aids the suffering human.

At the same time, there is another side to *bhakti* and the experience of the *bhakta*s "devotees." Part of the experience involves suffering: for the divinity is not always on hand to make things right, dispense advice, and lead a person in the dharmic direction. Take for instance, Dēvara Dāsimayya's tenth-century Kannada poem:

> Bodied,
> one will hunger.
>
> Bodied,
> one will lie.
>
> O you, don't you rib
> and taunt me
> again
> for having a body:
>
> body Thyself for once
> like me and see
> what happens,
>
> O Rāmanātha.[90]

Here the emotions represented are much more complex: this is not a poem about rejecting Śiva, but there is much more expressed than straightforward gratitude, love, and devotion; the voice expresses anger and bitter frustration. The poet's life is paradoxical and painful; and then, *necessarily*, the poet's devotion must be in the context of these terrible mortal tribulations.

What is striking – and this is crucial to the following analysis – is that many of themes expressed in the suffering aspect of the *bhakti* tradition are also themes that are interwoven into the epic's Karṇa narrative. And indeed that might strike some as counter-intuitive: why would a general on the *losing* side of the epic battle make a model for devotees?! At the outset, when we examine the epic context of the Kṛṣṇa's and Kuntī's embassies to Karṇa, we see that they constitute a *test*, a test that Karṇa *passes*. (One crucial framing analogy is the similar dual-pronged test Yudhiṣṭhira passes on the way to heaven.[91]) And while it may *seem* that Kṛṣṇa and Karṇa oppose each other (because Karṇa and Arjuna do), Karṇa is very much devoted to just the kind of deontological dharma (and dharmic faith) that Kṛṣṇa lays out in the *Bhagavadgītā*.[92]

If Karṇa lives as a "disguised" *bhakta* (just as he lives as a "disguised" ksatriya), then it is not surprising that his tragic biography touches on many of the themes that the *bhakti* poets explore when writing of the difficulties of devotion.[93] For example, just as the events of Karṇa's life threaten to reduce him to nothing (Kṛpa's stinging question, Kṛṣṇa's overwhelming temptation), so his love and devotion to his parents becomes all the harder. The twelfth century Kannada *bhakta* Basavaṇṇa would sympathize:

Don't you take on
this thing called *bhakti*:
    like a saw
    it cuts when it goes
    and it cuts again
    when it comes
If you risk your hand
with a cobra in a pitcher
will it let you
pass?[94]

He'll grind you till you're fine and small.
He'll file till your color shows.
    If your grain grows fine
    in the grinding
    if you show color
    in the filing,
then our lord of the meeting rivers
will love you
and look after you.[95]

Or if Karṇa felt that he was alone in his beliefs and devotion, and even if he did not doubt them, it seemed that everyone else and their divinities were pursuing other (hypocritical) ends, he might have taken solace in a song from the fifteenth century Hindi poet Kabir:

Saints, I see the world is mad.
If I tell the truth they rush to beat me,
if I lie they trust me.
I've seen the pious Hindus, rule-followers,
early morning bath-takers –
killing souls, they worship rocks.

They know nothing.
I've seen plenty of Muslims teachers, holy men
reading their holy books
and teaching their pupils techniques.
They know just as much.
And posturing yogis, hypocrites,
hearts crammed with pride,
praying to brass, to stones, reeling. . .
. . .
No one knows the secret.
They buzz their mantras from house to house,
puffed with pride.
The pupils drown along with their gurus.
In the end they're sorry.
Kabir says, listen saints:
they're all deluded!
Whatever I say, nobody gets it.
It's too simple.[96]

Then again, when Kuntī's and Kṛṣṇa's offers to Karṇa seems to leave his world without the system of meaning that it had previously,[97] he can feel the anxiety of proceeding with no protection but the love he gives and receives from his parents. Govinda-dāsa's fifteenth century Bengali poem captures, in a different metaphor, both this anxiety and the resolute *bhakti* that conquers it:

O Mādhava, how shall I tell you of my terror?
I could not describe my coming here
if I had a million tongues.
When I left my room and saw the darkness
I trembled:
I could not see the path,
there were snakes that writhed around my ankles!
I was alone, a woman; the night was so dark,
the forest so dense and gloomy,
and I had far to go.
The rain was pouring down –
which path should I take?
My feet were muddy
and burning where thorns had scratched them.
But I had the hope of seeing you, none of it mattered,
and now my terror seems far away . . .
When the sound of your flute reaches my ears
it compels me to leave my home, my friends,
it draws me into the dark toward you.
I no longer count the pain of coming here,
says Govinda-dāsa.

The *productive* aspect of this comparison arises when we take what we have discovered above about Karṇa's psychological growth and apply it to the *bhakti* poets. Then we will be able to see expressions of a kind of growth, of a kind of self-transcendence, of a loyalty to principle and in particular a loyalty to the dharma of

devotion and love. The same love that Karṇa exhibited for his parents is the love that the *bhakti* poets seem to exhibit for their divine beloved.

Moreover, this new paradigm for interpreting *bhakti* poetry can also help us to understand the type of *saintliness* that developed in the *bhakti* movement.[98] For example, in the Hindi *Bhaktamal*, the hagiographies "show how the rules of dharma are embodied in people's lives – what it means in the most extreme circumstances to carry out obligations to one's father, teacher, husband, or society. But by emphasizing extreme circumstances, they do something more. They teach character. . ."[99]

Indeed, part of Karṇa's popular appeal is that many are torn between the deep appeal of his actions and character, and the fact that he fights on the "wrong" side of the epic battle. Still, just as the *bhakti* saints were often viewed as both canonical and socially progressive (or even revolutionary), so Karṇa is both a traditional hero of the epic as well as a character that critiques conventional dharmic morality and prefigures the personal challenge of later *bhakti*: the "ethical logic [of devotion] that demands more, rather than less, from those who come under its spell."[100] The extended and detailed application of this paradigm to the *bhakti* poets would entail a much more extensive treatment, a treatment that would no doubt highlight the unique humanities expressed in these poems and their active and heroic development and maturing. As well, it could also show us how a literary character can help us interpret both ourselves and our ancestors.

Conclusion: Constructing Hermenutical Paradigms from the Epic

We can appreciate the value of studying the Sanskrit epic by showing how Karṇa, as a character, can participate in pre-existing scholarly discussions from Western academia, the Sanskrit literary tradition, and the *bhakti* tradition. As a carefully formed literary and psychological character, the *Mahābhārata*'s Karṇa allows us to expand our repertoire of psychological paradigms, expand our vision of heroic, steadfast courage, and points us towards (and helps us better understand) the subtleties of *bhakti*. This last aspect presents us with the opportunity for reviewing the bhaktic framework from the perspective of the struggling (rather than adoring) *bhakta*. Not only are many aspects of the suffering strand of the *bhakti* tradition interwoven into the Karṇa narrative, but when his narrative critiques conventional dharmic morality, Karṇa's character prefigures the poet-saints who embody the personal challenge of *bhakti*. Karṇa's love for his parents is similar to the love that the *bhakti* poets express for their divine beloved, in that it combines love, loyalty, and self-transcendence, setting the stage for a renewed attention to the distinctive courageous, heroic, and human aspects of *bhakti* poet-saints.

By proposing a new framework for understanding the heroic archetype, this chapter provides an example of how Sanskrit epic can give us a new way of interpreting psychological growth, and hence human character. It is, as well, an example of the trove of hermeneutical paradigms locked within Hindu texts and traditions,

paradigms which should come to light in order to develop richer cross-cultural hermeneutics. At the same time, we must be careful to note that such a paradigm is not merely "there" for the taking. As we have seen, both the text (the *Mahābhārata*) and the tradition (of Sanskrit literary aesthetics) *suggest* this paradigm, but the paradigm emerges only from an active, *constructive* approach to the text and the tradition. That is not to say that the Hindu tradition is itself passive; rather that a genuine conversation between Hindu and Western hermeneutical traditions requires us actively to construct the richest and most interesting paradigms contained within each tradition. And, by elaborating an alternative (Hindu) vision of a particular hermeneutical (psychological) paradigm, this piece also hopes to add to the developing relationship between the Hindu tradition and Western hermeneutics.

Notes

[1] Note that this is not the only treatment of the issue of psychological growth in the Sanskrit tradition. While this paper analyzes one particular approach, there are indeed others, such as the psychology developed in the Yogasutras.

[2] For an overview of the bhakti tradition, see, for example, A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973). pp. 20–57. Or John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). pp. 3–7.

[3] See Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics & Theology in Myth*, *Lectures on the History of Religions New Series, No. 16* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). p. 47.

[4] Ibid., p. 54.

[5] Ibid., pp. 66–67.

[6] Ibid., p. 59.

[7] Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the Mahabharata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). p. 41.

[8] At the same time, the sūta caste is also traditionally the caste of the epic reciters! And Kṛṣṇa himself participates in the epic battle as a charioteer!

[9] Citing scripture legalistically, Duryodhana reminds the crowd that class is not always a matter of birth. A man who rules a kingdom becomes *de facto* a kṣatriya. So Duryodhana bestows a small province on Karṇa. Immediately, priests are summoned and Karṇa is anointed.

[10] One interesting example is the princess Draupadī's groom-choice ceremony (*svayaṃvara*). Just as at the tournament, Karṇa is disallowed from even *participating*. The contest involves stringing a bow and when Karṇa steps up to try, Draupadī objects, saying that she should not be married to the son of a *sūta*. (Draupadī is a kṣatriya princess.) That certainly offends Karṇa, but the insult is compounded when Draupadī allows a *brahmin* attending the svayaṃvara to compete for her hand. The same argument based on class should indeed apply just as well to the brahmin: as Manu says, "a twice-born man should marry a wife who is of the *same* class. . ." And even though "marrying up" (hypergamy) is not disallowed by the *dharmaśāstra*s (for example by Manu), in theory Draupadī should be choosing among kṣatriya princes. In that sense, Draupadī is not acting wrongly, only unconventionally when she allows the brahmin to compete. To Karṇa, Draupadī's unfairness lies in the way that she emphasizes convention when it comes to prohibiting Karṇa from the tournament, but she stretches convention when she allows the brahmin to attempt to string the bow. The brahmin turns out to be Arjuna in disguise, and so Draupadī does indeed wind up marrying a kṣatriya. To Karṇa, however, the process that led to that outcome was inconsistent and unfair. Ironically, then, Karṇa too is a kṣatriya in disguise, like Arjuna.

[11] It is interesting to note here that the youngest two (twin) Pandavas are themselves "adopted" by Kunti; their mother, Madri, committed sati when her husband Pandu died. The Pandavas get their name from Pandu, but he did not father any of them.

[12] 5.139.23.
[13] 5.144.3.
[14] After the war is over, it is revealed to the Pāṇḍavas that Karṇa was their brother. Yudhiṣṭhira in particular is inconsolable; he regrets not having noticed the similarity in feet between Karṇa and Kuntī. Yudhiṣṭhira through his life has been haunted by images of Karṇa; it has always been Karṇa whom he has feared most on the Kaurava side. Now it is Karṇa for whom he grieves the most.
[15] Otto Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero," in *In Quest of the Hero*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). p. 8. Rank's essay was published in 1909; an English translation appeared in 1914.
[16] Ibid., p. 8.
[17] Ibid., p. 9.
[18] Ibid., p. 15.
[19] To my mind, such a variant is unlikely to have had wide circulation. Since one of the battle parvans is the Karṇa Parvan, Karṇa must live to be a general of the Kaurava army (after Bhīṣma dies). Nevertheless, even this widely divergent variant still preserves as central the drama of Karṇa's choice when confronted by his biological identity. And thus, even if Rank's variant is very different from the one we have discussed, the mental constitution of a character whose birth is of a certain type, and who poignantly confronts his biological identity, is at the heart of Karṇa's psychological character.
[20] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 57. Rank provides another version of the essential elements of the prototype of the birth of the hero: "Summarizing the essentials of the hero myth, we find the descent from noble parents, the exposure in a river, and in a box, and the raising by lowly parents; followed in the further evolution of the story by the hero's return to his first parents, with or without punishment meted out to them... It is very evident that the two parent-couples of the myth correspond to the real and the imaginary parent-couple of the romantic fantasy." p. 62.
[21] Ibid., p. 15.
[22] Ibid.
[23] FitzRoy Richard Somerset Raglan, "The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama," in *In Quest of the Hero*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). p. 139.
[24] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 62.
[25] In this chapter, only male heroes will be discussed, both because Karṇa is male and because analyzing the female child would require a different paradigm entirely.
[26] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 63.
[27] Ibid., p. 64.
[28] See also the end of Goldman's paper. Robert P. Goldman, "Fathers, Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6 (1978).
[29] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 63.
[30] This analysis can be found in: Aditya Adarkar, "Karna in the Mahabharata" (Phd Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2001). Chapter 3.
[31] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 59.
[32] Ibid., p. 74.
[33] Ibid., p. 59.
[34] See my Section below "Familial Relations Gone Awry."
[35] Here, I am using 'conventional narrative' to refer to V. S. Sukthankar's interpretation. (Vishnu Sitaram Sukthankar, *On the Meaning of the Mahabharata* (Bombay: Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1957). pp. 49–53) Believing that all divine advice is good advice, Sukthankar feels that Karṇa's refusal to heed such advice is prideful. Karṇa's "inferiority complex" makes him lash out at all the noble characters in the epic. And his generosity is "but a pose, albeit an unconscious pose, a clever artifice to outdo the accredited nobility in their vaunted virtue [and] liberality, and to hear himself lauded... He had no true generosity of heart." Sukthankar concludes that Karṇa is "a man with a frustration complex and therefore a clear case of abnormal mentality." And while I disagree with Sukthankar, I owe much to the clarity with which, and the rhetoric by which, he lays out his interpretation.
[36] Thanks to Neil Coffee, personal communication, for this insight.
[37] *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, trans. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Bantam Classics, 1986). 1.31–33.

[38] Thanks to the editors for these insights.
[39] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 60.
[40] Ibid., pp. 70–71.
[41] Quoted in ibid., p. 77.
[42] Ibid., p. 78.
[43] Ibid., p. 76.
[44] See Jules de Gaultier, *Le Bovarysme*, New edn. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1921). (Originally published in 1902).
[45] Stephen Heath, *Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary*, *Landmarks of World Literature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[46] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 61.
[47] See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: Norton, 1967).
[48] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 61.
[49] Again, talking about real psychological phenomena when Karṇa's father is a god is perhaps a conflation of discourses, but, I feel it is a path into the richness of the work. And it prevents, in my opinion, a euhemeristic flattening of the text's psychological dimensions.
[50] Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 62.
[51] Ibid., p. 65.
[52] Karṇa has the habit of praying every day to the sun and has vowed that any brahmin (a member of the priestly class) that approaches him while he is praying will receive alms from him. One day while Karṇa is praying, Indra in the guise of a brahmin approaches Karṇa and requests, as a gift, Karṇa's body armor and earrings. Despite being warned that this is a trick, Karṇa cuts them off his body and hands them to Indra. In return, Karṇa receives an infallible weapon that, however, can only be used once.
[53] This is Bhīma's taunt at 1.127.5.
[54] See story in note above.
[55] See e.g. Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 62.
[56] Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. p. 48: "The best etymology of the word *familia* is that which aligns it with the Sanskrit *dhāman*, a house." Mauss quotes Walde's *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (p. 70) and writes "Although Walde hesitates over the proposed etymology, there is no need. The principal *res*, the real *mancipium* of the *familia*, is the *mancipium* slave whose other name, *famulus*, has the same etymology as *familia*." p. 119, note 12.
[57] A. K. Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus," in *Indian Literature*, ed. A. Potdar (Simla: Indian Institute for Advanced Study, 1972).
[58] A. K. Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus," in *Oedipus, a Folklore Casebook*, ed. Lowell Edmunds and Alan Dundes (New York: Garland, 1983). I note in passing that Ramanujan agrees with Goldman that the triangle Vasiṣṭha-Viśvāmitra-kāma-dhenu should be interpreted as (first) brahman-kṣatriya-fecundity and (then) as father-son-mother.
[59] Ibid., p. 254.
[60] Ibid., p. 243.
[61] Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978). p. 53.
[62] Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus." p. 243.
[63] Ibid., p. 243.
[64] Whether or not Ramanujan is correct, such an analysis can shed little light on a story wherein a mother's first act is to send her child down the river. The dynamic thus is completely different: Karṇa is the character doing the clinging, not his parents per se. This suggests too that in addition to *point of view*, we might also consider *agency* in addition to narrative structure.
[65] Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus." p. 249.
[66] Ibid., p. 248.
[67] Goldman translates Bhīṣma's name as "awesome" – it can also be translated "terrible" and that would be the feeling I prefer.
[68] Similarly, when Karṇa gives up his armor to Indra, he might be unwittingly contributing to the inevitability of the war.

[69] A Tamil tale from Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus." pp. 249–50.
[70] Goldman, "Fathers, Sons, and Gurus: Oedipal Conflict in the Sanskrit Epics." p. 349.
[71] Ibid., p. 349.
[72] Ibid., p. 349.
[73] Surprisingly, neither Ramanujan nor Goldman use this famous example as an Oedipal type. Here is a mother who greets the news of her son's marriage by vitiating his relationship with his bride. By forcing Arjuna to share Draupadī, Kuntī undermines his sexual relationship to his wife. There is a justice to this scene similar to the one we discuss in the text. Arjuna won Draupadi by a trick – masquerading as a brahmin; thus he has violated a rule of sexual dharma by winning her. Second, the fact that the epic authors have to go to such lengths to justify this polyandry suggests (as in "the lady doth protest too much!") that there is something here that is improper that needs some explaining away.
[74] Similarly, there are "old curse" explanations for Draupadī's polyandry.
[75] Whether or not Rāma is held up as an ideal son is another issue altogether – here I am concentrating on the characters in the *Mahabharata*.
[76] Ramanujan, "The Indian Oedipus." p. 244.
[77] Ibid., p. 245.
[78] Ibid., p. 247 This claim, combined with the Freudian assumption above, would mean that *all* Indian men were dysfunctional (psychosexually fixated). Whether or not psychoanalysts believed this were true, this does not seem like a productive path into the Indian psyche(s).
[79] See Goldman's reading of the Babhruvāhana episode.
[80] *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*.
[81] The fact that the Moses story is inverted (e.g. Moses has a lowly birth) – the precise reversal of the pattern – is the proof of the validity of the prototype. This analysis is similar Freudian dream analysis: e.g. a dream in which you dream of fighting with somehow is not a dream of hating that person but interacting with, or loving, them. The wish fulfillment is represented by the opposite of the wish. See Rank, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero." p. 70.
[82] Just before the battle of Kurukṣetra, Karṇa quarrels with Bhīṣma and vows not to fight until Bhīṣma has been killed.
[83] Monier Monier-Williams, *Dictionary, English and Sanskrit* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1961). I used the electronic version of this dictionary.
[84] The gender division here is (disappointingly) stereotypical: the feminine noun points towards pleasure and satisfaction while the masculine noun points towards mindful intelligence.
[85] Kaviraja Visvanatha, *The Sahityadarpana. Paricchedas I, Ii, X Arthalankaras*, trans. Panduranga Vamana Kane, 1st ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965).
[86] Sheldon Pollock, "The Social Aesthetic and Sanskrit Literary Theory," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29 (2001). p. 25.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., p. 27.
[89] Luis Gonzalez-Riemann has shown that much modern epic scholarship has imported a later theory of yugas into the *Mahābhārata*. Here, I only wish to employ the theory of the yugas in the context of the Karṇa narrative; within this narrative, Kṛṣṇa himself reminds Karṇa that the epic battle will signal the end of the three other yugas and, hence, the start of the Kali Yuga. (5.140.6 ff.) See Luis Gonzalez-Riemann, *The Mahabharata and the Yugas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).
[90] Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*. p. 107. Dēvara Dāsimayya was a tenth-century Kannada poet.
[91] For the full argument see Aditya Adarkar, "Karna's Choice: Courage and Character in the Face of an Ethical Dilemma.," in *The Mahabharata: Whatever Is Not Here Is Nowhere Else*, ed. T. S. Rukmani (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2005).
[92] Again, more details of this argument can be found in ibid.
[93] To stress an earlier point: the *bhakti* tradition is permeated by expressions of bliss and expressions of suffering; the experience of devotion has both sides. Here, we are exploring the expressions of suffering.
[94] Ramnujan, *Speaking of Siva*. p. 79. Poem # 212.
[95] Ibid., p. 86. Poem # 686. The "lord of the meeting rivers" is Siva.
[96] Kabir, *The Bijak of Kabir*, trans. Linda Hess and Shukdev Singh (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983). pp. 42–43. Poem # 4.

[97] Specifically, their offers leave him in a state akin to Paul Tillich's "anxiety of meaningless." This argument is detailed in Adarkar, "Karna's Choice: Courage and Character in the Face of an Ethical Dilemma."
[98] In this way, the study proposed here would participate in the contemporary discussion of saintliness. See for example John Stratton Hawley, ed., *Saints and Virtues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). and Andrew Michael Flescher, *Heroes, Saints, and Ordinary Morality* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003).
[99] John Stratton Hawley, "Morality Beyond Morality in the Lives of Three Hindu Saints," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. John Stratton Hawley (Berkeley: University of California, 1987). p. 52.
[100] Ibid., p. 66.

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Value Ethics in the Early Upaniṣads: A Hermeneutic Approach

T.S. Rukmani

The interest to write on ethics in the early *Upaniṣads* was kindled by my meeting a number of scholars of religion and philosophy who have misperceptions concerning the presence of any ethics in Hinduism. Very often one hears the remark that there is no moral philosophy in Hinduism almost suggesting that Hinduism has no ethical norms. This is a gross misunderstanding of Hinduism to say the least. This paper is, therefore, a small attempt to address that question.

As scholars like P.T. Raju and others have pointed out, not developing a philosophy of ethics or not having a word equivalent to the western notion of ethics in Hinduism, cannot be equated to the absence of ethics in Hindu thought. I am reminded of Fichte who told his countrymen that there existed in the German language no specific word for character, because to be German was automatically to be endowed with character. One could similarly say, in a lighter vein, that at the time that Hindu philosophy was in the making, the rules regulating life in society was well established and there was no need for a specific word denoting the western notion of ethics in Hinduism, as to be a Hindu was to follow the rules of *dharma*. Thus Hindu thought/philosophy in its formative period took for granted that all humans are governed by the rules of the *varṇāśramadharma* (division of society based on duties and stages of life) and by the *sādhāraṇadharmas* (common morality) when it applies, and could not, therefore, visualize anyone transgressing the codes of *dharma.* Thus 'writers on philosophy . . . take for granted a life lived according to the dictates of *Dharma*, and do not, therefore, expatiate on them. Ethics does not accordingly form a separate branch of Indian philosophy'[1]. The regulation of life, as P.T. Raju remarks, was left to the writers of *dharmaśāstra* by the philosophers.

So also, as G.C. Pande remarks, there was an emphasis on the practical cultivation of moral principles as given in the social traditions, instead of too much discussion and ratiocination on moral philosophy. Unless one is sensitive to this way of viewing morality in the Hindu context there can be no significant understanding of its ethical moorings. While this perception of a lack of moral philosophy in Hinduism is still prevalent amongst large sections of scholars and laypersons alike, one

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has to acknowledge the efforts of some western scholars like Hopkins, Mckenzie, Deutsch and others who have tried to demonstrate the sense of how the Hindus developed their own ethical views in the overall canopy of *Dharma*.

Another reason for looking for ethics in the early *Upaniṣads* is also because there is a widespread belief even amongst Upanisadic scholars in the west like Schweitzer, Zaehner et al, that one who is a liberated person while still alive (*jīvanmukta*), is beyond all morality and can indulge in any act, even immoral acts. I try answering this question somewhat later in the course of this paper.

The tendency to expect all systems of thought to follow a western paradigm has led to this misconception of scholars holding the view that there is no ethics in Hindu thought. We have to be sensitive to differing worldviews and not expect an ordering of values or concepts to fit only a western paradigm. No society can survive without a sense of right and wrong and there is no moral neutrality in any society. Eastern philosophy in general and in this case Hindu philosophy, with which we are dealing, is not particularly concerned with the origin of moral philosophy which, in any case, can have no answer. The vast literature on moral philosophy in the West which has not reached any conclusive conclusion till date, goes to show that there is no one way to understand the origins of ethics. Whether one supports the transcendentalist or empiricist origins of ethics, it is not the origins that one should be worried about. It is how people in the lived world use their sense of what is right and wrong that makes for a better world. And in keeping with the practical wisdom of ancient Vedic sages, while there was a nod of assent to the natural law of *ṛta* which, in common with physical laws, was also acknowledged as the foundation of moral law, the looseness of the definition of what constitutes *ṛta* allowed for its development in different directions in subsequent periods, keeping pace with the cultural development of its people.

I had occasion to state earlier, of which in missing in one my papers (Rukmani in Hindu-Christian Studies, 2003), that, though situated in the west and knowing fully well that our writings would be read and used at least by some western religious and philosophical scholars, there is no need to argue or pretend that there is a uniform model by which one can approach problems of theology, philosophy, ethics etc., in order to make them accessible to a western audience. As these disciplines may not even denote and have the same meanings in diverse cultures it would be truer to state that the attempt of scholars who try to understand comparative areas in different cultures like moral philosophy for instance, would be willing to transcend their own limitations of culture-specificity and appreciate the growth of that branch of study in its own respective setting. It is also quite possible to find some resonances and similarities in the way philosophy, ethics, theology etc., developed in cultures across the globe, as have been noticed in the areas of Greek and Indian philosophy, for instance.

With the above caveats it is now possible to look at the development of ethical precepts or 'moral philosophy' in the early *Upaniṣads*. It is in the flushing out of the richness and depth of some of the earlier ethical principles that we see that some of the hermeneutical principles of interpretation and refinements come into play in the early *Upaniṣads*.

In the development of any principle or idea in the course of history, the ingenuity of the wise who, in today's parlance, can be called social scientists, play a role in the guidance of their people in the right path aided by the philosophers or thinkers and thus they are together, in truth, engaging in a hermeneutics of interpretation of ideas available to them and trying to fit them into the changed scene. Since societies are not static and exhibit continuous growth, it is the task of those leaders in society who are concerned to preserve what is best in the tradition to be able to come up with renewed strategies to preserve the values that they consider to be the best in the culture they represent. In that sense there have been hermeneuts spanning the entire history of Indian culture starting for heuristic purposes with the Vedic period. It is in the way that new interpretations were put on old ideas and practices even while preserving what was its essence, that helped in bringing new ways of understanding them. The foundations of moral theory in Hindu thought would rather look at the situation in hand and devise means to cope with them. When that is also combined with the pursuit of a specific end value like *dharma* or *mokṣa*, moral behavior is viewed as one which is not against some divine rule or law but that which will make the achievement of that end value within access of the individual. This way of viewing moral behavior can also be a result of the view that the moral injunctions 'are to be interpreted as guidelines rather than as commandments handed down from above'[2] which one has to follow for fear of consequences.

A more difficult question to answer in the context of morality in the *Upaniṣads* is whether it is possible to talk about morality at all in a society in which there is inequality and all those living in a society do not have the same equal rights, as was the case in the time of the *Upaniṣads*, when the *varṇāśramadharma* was in place. While this is a relevant query it is also a fact that most of the writings on Morality and Moral Philosophy round the globe, have taken place in the presence of inequalities in society. Starting with Aristotle who was complacent of the presence of slaves in his time, we find a host of philosophers in England like Hobbes, Locke, Butler, Hume, Price, Smith, and others all authoring works on morality within a society which had slaves and which abolished it only by the act of 1833. It is also good to remind ourselves that women were not considered equal to men and earned their right to vote as citizens in England only in the beginning of the twentieth century. Similarly women and children were considered the property of men for quite some time in Canada. It is also pertinent that a number of moral theories were being propounded by philosophers during the colonial times when, around the world, in the British and the other colonies the colonized were treated worse than animals. One has only to recall the way Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of a railway compartment at Pietermaritzburg in South Africa, to realize the distance between theory and practice in society. The judgmental attitude of one's own religion being morally superior to other religions can also be counted in the same category. And of course moral laws applying only to humans that allow cruel and non-compassionate behavior towards animals and other beings, which concerns environmental ethics, has also to be taken into account in this calculation. Thus we can make out a case for the possibility of discussing ideal moral behavior even when the ground conditions

in which the debate takes place need not be ideal, which justifies a discussion about Morality in the early *Upaniṣads*.

In order for individuals and societies to survive in the world and continue to lead decent lives in their respective societies, it goes without saying that there must be cultivated a sense of decent moral behavior. This is only possible if there are some basic rules of moral behavior that govern all individuals as *qua* individuals or as part of society or as part of the larger world. And it is axiomatic that there cannot be a set of principles that can be the ‘norm’ for all peoples of the world in spite of appeals to the contrary by some moral philosophers. One can only hope that people follow the laudable universal norm that different people from round the world tolerate and respect each other.

There have been philosophers in the past like Kant, for instance, who argued for a categorical imperative or a Prabhākara, in the Indian context, who similarly argued for a moral stance of *dharma* for dharma’s sake alone. The closest to a common morality that Bernard Gert talks about[3] was also expressed in the *sādhāraṇadharmas* mentioned in *Manu Smṛti*, the *Mahābhārata* etc., as something to be followed by all persons. Whatever the approach to Morality, it goes without saying that there is a symbiotic relationship between moral philosophy/ethics and society. And that, in turn, also depends on the understanding each society has of itself in terms of what constitutes its highest value. There is also the larger question of the meaning of life, which is engaging the minds of scholars like Thaddeus Metz and others in recent times. A number of theories are propounded by naturalists, super-naturalists and nihilists as to the meaning of ‘life’ and there is also a further discussion as to whether there are different types of meaningful lives i.e. whether a qualitative analysis is necessary or not.[4] Without getting into the different permutations and combinations of a meaningful life, I believe, for the purposes of this paper, that a meaningful life is that lived in accordance with certain moral values that the society in which an individual lives, holds dear. A meaningful life, for instance, in the Hindu worldview could be one that strives for *mokṣa* (freedom, liberation), which is a value that goes beyond just obtaining happiness and fulfilling obligations.

Coming back to the connection between ethics and society, there are philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre who have demonstrated this thesis of the mutual dependence of moral philosophy and sociology in many of their works. In Homeric Greece, for instance, a person, if he discharged his allotted social function in the manner in which society expected him to discharge the function, will be considered to be good. Here, there is a moral judgment made of one being ‘good’ purely based on the person’s performance, or the behavior expected of him. If we carry the analogy a little further we could then say that one who is good, judged by his performance, becomes a role model and upheld as an example in society for others to emulate. Then ‘good’ as a moral value is not because ‘good’ has a transcendent value but because it fulfils the functional expectancy of a character in society. MacIntyre illustrates this by the example of the Homeric nobleman who is considered to be good because he is brave, skilful and successful in war and peace.[5] In a sense then moral reasoning is serviced to fulfil the expectancy of a society in terms of the value it believes in, and in terms

of the kind of individual and social behavior that will achieve that value, which, in turn, it considers to be of the highest moral value.

If we apply the same criterion of functional performances determining moral virtues to early Vedic society, we find that the *ṛtvik* (officiating priest at sacrifice), who performs his *yajñas* (sacrifices) in accordance with strict rules is considered a good person, and he is also the 'character model' for others to emulate in order to be considered a good person. This is so because the Vedic society we are concerned with, values *yajña* and the performance of *yajña* in the prescribed manner, as of the highest value, not for its own sake, but for the realization of *ṛta* which is the teleological principle of physical and moral order, that Vedic society believed in. If life was led in this manner in consonance with *ṛta*, it will lead to material and spiritual welfare, both in this life and after death. The Vedic concept of *ṛta* arises not by our rational powers but it is apprehended in terms of moral and aesthetic values. It is revealed in the Vedic spiritual practices of prayer and sacrifice. One can compare this belief in *ṛta* with the transcendent character of the Idea of the Good of Plato or the Unmoved Mover/Unmoved Perfection of Aristotle. While Vedic society approached the intuition of *ṛta* through a life lived in piety, the Greek philosophers serviced philosophy itself in this task of realizing the 'telos'. Thus Plato declared that the transcendent good is 'incapable of adequate expression in words'[6] and 'can be gained only by a sudden illumination, in a soul prepared for it by austerity of life and discipline of intellect'.[7] Thus the Vedic society we are concerned with believed in a 'telos' called *ṛta*, and leading one's life in order to be in tune with *ṛta*. Of course I do not mean to draw an exact parallel between the Greek concept of 'telos' and the Rgvedic *ṛta* in all its dimensions, but the intention is to indicate the broad agreements in terms of an essence that both these cultures believed in.

In a teleological worldview we can expect a shift in what will be considered as moral behavior, when a change occurs in the concept of what constitutes the 'telos'; in the changed milieu then, that moral behavior which achieves the changed value will replace the earlier judgment. Thus, in a general way, one cannot but agree with MacIntyre's analysis about moral concepts being 'embodied in and [being] partially constitutive of forms of social life.'[8]

If what is said above is accepted, then, in order to talk about Ethics in the *Upaniṣads*, one will have to try and understand the Upanisadic society as it evolved from the time of the early Vedic society. Our evidences for this exploration can, unfortunately, only be the texts that are now available. Thus, in this paper, I will first try and point out what governed the moral behavior of individuals, both as individuals and as members of Vedic society as seen in the *Ṛgveda* then, after a brief sojourn into the world of the *Brāhmaṇas* (texts mainly dealing with rituals) and the *Āraṇyakas* (texts like the *Upaniṣads* studied in the forest i.e. having a spiritual nature), I will concentrate on the early *Upaniṣads* to try and understand behavior in terms of the twin values of *dharma* and *mokṣa* which had come to characterize Upanisadic society.

It will not be a gross misjudgment to say that Hinduism (using the word in its many incarnations from Vedic to modern times) has always believed in a 'telos', an essence, which a life lived in accordance with certain moral principles can reveal.

This picture of Hinduism through the ages has held good generally, up to the present times. There may be minor cracks visible here and there and one is particularly aware of it in the context of globalization and so on, which are impacting society in recent times. But even so, to this day, a substantial part of the Hindu population believes in a 'telos', even though the 'telos' itself can be understood in very different ways by different sections of the population.

In order to place our topic in context, we have to start with the early Vedic society in which *ṛta* was considered the cosmic and physiological moral principle which underlies both the physical order in 'nature' as well as what governs the right behavior of individuals. The *devas* were in control of this *ṛta* in both senses and the implication was that man must please the *devas* not only by offering sacrifices to them but also by leading a morally pure life. The *devas* are themselves viewed as having reached their state of immortality by the correct performance of *yajñas*. '*Ṛta* is thus the ideal principle of ordering, the paradigmatic principle of ultimate reality'.[9]

Ṛta is also called *satya* and signified the ultimate moral principle that informs what 'a good life' can mean. But is there a way of discerning what this *ṛta* is, which is said to guide one's moral life? The answer is that through the correct performance of *yajñas* (sacrifices) the *ṛṣis* (sages) could directly perceive or intuit this *ṛta* principle as 'unfolding through successive layers of reality'[10]. Thus, in this society, those who conformed to the *ṛta* 'telos' and performed the *yajñas* in a prescribed manner, would be considered 'good' and morally virtuous, whereas the others would be 'bad' and vice.[11]

If we have to list some of the basic moral characteristics of 'good' in this period vis-a-vis the individual, it would be *śraddhā* (faith) in the efficacy of what one does, obedience to the rules as well as to the *rsi* who performs the *yajña* (considered as one who knows), self-discipline and *tapaḥ* (self restraint), so that one avoids temptation to the passions and trains oneself in the path of *yajña*. *Tapah* is given an important place, equal to *ṛta* and *satya*, as it is of great instrumental value in leading to *ṛta*.

In fact RV. X.190[12] indicates that *ṛta* and *satya* are the result of *tapaḥ* or self restraint. As *ṛta* has been conceived of as both a natural and moral law, this entailed that the individual behaves morally towards others inhabiting the world, because only a moral behavior can ensure the welfare of all, including oneself. Thus, even though self interest can be the springs of action in Vedic society, this linking of self interest with a 'telos' dictated the moral behavior of humans in Vedic society both as individuals and as members of a society. Statements like 'He who eats alone is a sinner'[13] and 'Let us meet together speak together' etc.,[14] all indicate the high store early Vedic society placed on a harmonious social life.

Along with the value of leading a good life both here and after death, Vedic society also valued the principle of freedom and individual choice. Thus an individual could choose to live in accordance with *ṛta* or not and in a sense, 'freedom to choose' is viewed as of value. It is this freedom that enables the *muni* described in RV X.136 to walk out of a rule bound society.[15] But it seems, from the hymn, that the *muni* has only chosen to discard *yajña* as the mode for realizing *ṛta*. He still seems to work within the 'telos' for it appears that he has exercised his freedom to

choose another mode to reach the same value.[16] Along with the freedom to choose must have developed the notion of *ṛṇa* or indebtedness to choose rightly. Thus while freedom to choose was an option, there was the duty or indebtedness *(ṛṇa)* to choose correctly, in order that one might preserve the integrity of oneself and the cosmic order.

So, in the early Vedic period, we find *ṛta, satya* and *tapaḥ* informing the moral behavior of a person because that is how he affirms his identity in a teleological sense. *Tapaḥ* will, in turn, continue to add new meanings and dictate 'moral' behavior in the later historical periods. Of course the undue emphasis of the means i.e., *yajña* to the end i.e., *ṛta,* led to a ritualistic excess in the next phase of Vedic culture, i.e. in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*. *Yajña* almost replaced *ṛta* in this Brāhmaṇic period and moral life, accordingly, revolved around the *yajña* paradigm, emphasizing all the purificatory ceremonies, the fasts, baths, time of *yajña* etc., which took on added significance. Personal cleanliness and strict adherence and obedience to rules, as well as faith in the efficacy of *yajña,* were the qualities that took precedence in this period. Though *ṛta* lost some of its importance as the 'telos', it was replaced by *'yajña'* which took on the characteristic of *ṛta* in both its physical and moral dimension. The theory of *karma* was also taking shape which, at this time, only emphasized the correct performance of *yajña*. Individual moral behavior was thus defined in terms of *yajña* performance, even though the societal obligations developed further through the earlier *ṛṇa* idea. In this period, therefore we find humans enjoined to fulfil their debts to the *devas* by correct performance of *yajñas*, to the *ṛṣis,* who initiated them into their culture, by the study of the *Vedas*, and to the *pitṛs* (ancestors) by continuing the race through marriage and begetting children, mainly sons.

It is always difficult to pinpoint whether ideas precede interpretation or interpretation of already existent ideas precede new developments. But this can only be an interactive process of give and take. For whatever reason, when the action model or *yajña* became paramount in the Brāhmaṇa period, a whole new paradigm shift took place with the ultimate value being the correct performance of *yajña*. As *karma* was primarily ritual *karma* or *yajña* at this time, anyone who followed the correct execution of *karma* would be a good person. An indebtedness to the sages or *ṛṣis* who have helped in preserving the cultural and intellectual memory has now taken the shape of paying society's debt (*ṛṇa*) to the *ṛṣis*. This concept of *ṛṇa* itself is a new interpretation of what one owes to society at large. The earlier *ṛta* concept had only a stipulation to act in accordance to what it is to be a human by following the physical and moral order of the universe. There was no guidance as to what those moral principles were. Whereas, here we have a spelling out of those moral values in terms of what one owes to one's culture and cultural memory.

One is reminded of what Aristotle and those who think like him have to say about what constitutes 'philosophical ethics'. Drawing on the connection or identity between virtue and knowledge Gadamer 'discerns a connection between *ethos* and logos', 'between the adult's becoming socialized through education and training and the logos of justification' (Gadamer trans. By Weinsheimer, 1999: xi). This is a restatement of Aristotle's idea i.e. that "virtue" does not consist merely in knowledge, for the possibility of knowledge depends, to the contrary, on what a person is

like, and the being of each one is formed beforehand through his or her education and the way of life' (ibid., 28) There is an important pointer here. Ethics cannot be divested from the ethos of the group to which it belongs. It is the imperatives of family and social order in respective societies that dictate how moral philosophy develops in each society. We can understand this in terms of Gadamer's phrase i.e. 'Indeed, recognizing human conditionedness . . . is quite compatible with the sublime unconditionality of the moral law' (ibid., 25). Thus while there is a realm of the unconditioned, it does not and need not inhibit one from an understanding of the moral philosophical underpinnings of a particular society which are based on its own 'ethos'.

The 'ethos' of the ancient Hindu thus shapes the formulation of his ethical virtues in many ways and we see this development in the Brāhmaṇa texts and in the *Upaniṣads*. One can see that the values in the Brāhmaṇa period, towards which a moral life points to, has an emphasis on the continuation of one's community and people. While the earlier qualities of faith, obedience and self- restraint continue to guide an individual's life, the three debts have expanded an individual's moral obligation towards his own immediate community and towards the continued preservation of its cultural heritage. So, now, knowledge of the scriptures and knowledge seeking per se, have acquired added significance for leading a good life. The freedom to choose is still there and it is this characteristic moral feature that will enable the future flowering of many an idea, in different forms, later in the Upaniṣadic period. Though the Brāhmaṇa literature does present a stultified, rigid adherence to the performance of *yajña* with blind faith, one has to remember that we get this picture from the selective character of the literature we possess which 'indicates more of the spirit of the age in which the selection was made than of the one in which the literature was produced'[17]. But one significant shift that had happened and pointed out earlier, is the spelling out of the debts to be fulfilled by humans and thus recognizing the duty one owes to others, beside oneself.

The freedom to choose and to question, which is in itself a moral behavior, led to the gradual devaluation of *yajña* and substituted in its place the twin concepts of *dharma* and *mokṣa* (liberation) by the time of the *Upaniṣads*. The shift must have taken place, amongst other things, by society coming in contact with other cultures and other unorthodox religious schools like Buddhism, Jainism, the Pañcarātra or Bhāgavata school, the Kāpālikas, etc. Some of this shift in thought can be seen in the Āraṇyaka literature, but it is in the early *Upaniṣads* that we come across many examples of the shifts that are taking place and where there are trends which indicate a clear break with the past, on the one hand, and where, on the other hand, there are attempts to salvage the best in the old and reconcile it with the new values. The tradition at this period shows a remarkable resilience to reinterpret new *nāstika* (un-Vedic) ideas to conform to its own *āstika* (Vedic) view and in the process almost revolutionalize some of the earlier concepts.

The early *Upaniṣads* can be assigned to the period between 900 BCE-400 BCE and include the *Upaniṣads* that are referred to in the *Brahmasūtra* commentary of Śaṅkarācārya. As such there are some belonging to the pre-Buddha phase and others that come within the formulation of Buddhist philosophy. The evidence from the

Bṛhadāraṇyaka and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* do show that renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*) as a mode of life that favours *mokṣa* has already found acceptance in the tradition. Moreover, Buddhism's and Jainism's philosophy of ethics will also contribute in the shaping of ethical values in Hinduism itself.

Before we attempt to read the *Upaniṣads* for evidence of ethical ideas we must know that a number of new ideas and social structures have come into being at this stage in Hinduism as well. The 'telos' has changed from *ṛta* to *dharma*, society is divided into *varṇas* or social classes,[18] both *dharma* and *mokṣa* vie with each other as the highest values to be striven for, and a social structuring of society in terms of classes and stages of life *(varṇāśramadharma)* has also come into being. Of great significance, in the moral context, was the theory of *karma* which, at this time, had developed into its full fledged form, transferring the result of good moral conduct in one life to be rewarded in future lives. The freedom to choose between what is 'good' and 'not good' now devolves on the individual himself. All these structures may not have assumed the rigidity they will acquire almost soon after, when the *Dharmaśāstras* were composed. But there is enough evidence to conclude that many of these concepts and institutions were in place at the time of the early *Upaniṣads*.

By now a change had also taken place in the understanding of the 'telos'. It is no longer outside of oneself like *ṛta* or *yajña* but what one actually in essence 'Is' and thus there was a call to leave home and hearth and live a life of mendicancy, meditating upon the highest self within, in order to realize one's true identity.[19] The highest moral behavior in this milieu was a non-egoistic ethic where renunciation of the family, wealth and society was advocated. All duality was devalued if one has to realize the ultimate 'truth' and only one who could get over the sense of duality could realize the 'telos'. The *ātman* (self) was a permanent entity and the belief in the transmigration of the *ātman* in accordance with *karma* till it attains *mokṣa* (liberation/freedom) in the moment of realizing its own self, was in place. While there are passages in the *Upaniṣads* that can be read in a dualistic manner, even in such a reading, *mokṣa* for oneself was the highest value. It is then quite pertinent to ask whether in this view of the *Upaniṣads*, where an individualistic 'telos' seeks to actualize itself, there can be any room for moral behavior. I shall come back to this question later, in the context of discussing *mokṣa*.

It is good to remember, in this context, that texts very often present an idealistic picture of society, which need not necessarily correspond to reality. While *mokṣa* was the highest value in the *Upaniṣads*, by its very nature, it can only be aspired for by a small minority. One has to believe that the general population was more in tune with living within *dharma* which is the 'telos' guiding their lives. The 'ethos' formed by training for a *dhārmic* life and for a life desiring *mokṣa*, did not vary much, for the one aspiring for *mokṣa* had to go through the stages of life of a student and householder, generally, before graduating to the ascetic's stage of life (*saṃnyāsāśrama*). Thus the training for moral behavior was uniform, except in rare cases, where one became a *saṃnyāsin* (renouncer/monk), straight after the *brahmacaryāśrama* (stage of being a student). But, in all cases, it was mandatory to go through the *brahmacaryāśrama*, which ensured moral training in accordance

with *dharma*. Therefore, when we examine the early *Upaniṣads*, we can declare that there was available guidance for moral behavior, in both instances i.e., for those who value *dharma* as of highest value as well as for those who opt for *mokṣa*. I will, therefore, argue that there are principles for individual moral behavior as well as correct behavior towards society, both when the highest value that guides an individual is *dharma* or when it is *mokṣa*.

It is now well known that most of the individual *Upaniṣads* are not homogeneous texts belonging to one chronological period. This fact has been very ably demonstrated by Belvalkar and Ranade.[20] It is thus reasonable to argue that there are earlier and later compositions in individual *Upaniṣads* which will impact on the ideas found in them. However, in this paper, I treat each *Upaniṣad* as one unit and try to discover their moral undertones. Thus, if we view society at this period in history as seen in the *Upaniṣads*, it is still the twin ideals of *dharma* and *mokṣa* that hold sway. Śaṅkarācarya mentions in his *Upodghāta* (introduction) to the *Bhagavadgītā* that *dharma* is of both kinds – one leading to *abhyudaya* and the other leading to *nihśreyas* (liberation).[21] The specific *dharmas* assigned to people based on the *varṇa* and *āśrama* classification takes care of the specified role of each individual within a *varṇa* as well as within society. The *āśramas* (stages of life of an individual) that are directly concerned with those following *dharma* as the highest value are those of the *brahmacarya* (student) and *gṛhastha* (householder); the *vānaprastha* (forest dweller) can be clubbed with the *saṃnyāsin* (renouncer) aiming at *mokṣa* as the highest value. So keeping that in view, we can first look at those sections of the *Upaniṣads* which clearly have a moral message for those within society and then examine the *mokṣa* passages, to evaluate their moral content.

We noticed how in the Ṛgvedic period both *ṛta,* the end value and *yajña*, the means to it, were viewed as external. In the Upaniṣadic period *dharma* has replaced *ṛta* and the way *dharma* is defined is interesting. While *ṛta* could be intuitively realized, we notice that the obligation to observe the threefold *ṛṇas* (debts), already mentioned, had made it possible for an individual to acquire *dharma* through fulfilling the *ṛṇas*. The *ṛṇas*, even while retaining the cosmic dimension of *ṛta*, emphasized, through the right performance of *yajña*, the personal acquisition of *dharma*. There is, thus, a subtle shift and a stress on individual betterment; but the other two debts to the sages and ancestors are voluntary acts and the emphasis in those two *ṛṇas* is on the fulfillment of one's obligation to society and to the cultural memory. The stress on the different *varṇas* fulfilling their *dharma* was also an obligation. Thus, *dharma* though defined for the various classes, was more an internal obligation to do one's duty and the appeal is more to one's inner sense of justice, whether it is called conscience or *antaḥkaraṇa*.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (Br.Up.) in a significant statement, points to this inner dimension of *dharma* in the following episode. *Brahman*, after creating all the four *varṇas,* says the *Upaniṣad*, was still not happy and then fulfilled itself by projecting *dharma*.[22] Further the *Upaniṣad* identifies *dharma* with *satya* (truth) thus affirming the moral virtue of truth embedded in *dharma*. This is mentioned specifically within the context of a *kṣatriya* who represents the ruler, and points to a higher principle or *dharma* by which the king rules i.e., *rājadharma*. Śaṅkara

tellingly comments that *dharma* rules even the ruler.[23] It is thus something right, implanted internally, which guides human conduct, to do the right thing.[24] And in the very next passage the Br.Up. extends the notion of *dharma* to the fulfillment of one's obligation not only to the three earlier mentioned *ṛṇas* but also to one's fellow beings and to all living beings, which is called the *pañcayajñas* (five sacrifices).[25] The *Upaniṣad* thus makes the point that one's behavior is to be correct not only towards other fellow beings but has to extend to animals, beasts, birds and ants. Built into this is the ethics of compassion and sympathy for all that inhabits the world. By leading a life of *dharma*, we are told that one attains well being (*abhyudaya*) in this world as well as after death. So behavior in accordance with *dharma* has an end value as well.

The same *Upaniṣad* also illustrates through the parable of Prajāpati's instruction to the three classes of his children (the *devas* or divine beings, *manuṣyas* or humans and *asuras* or demons) that each of these classes must practice *dama* (self-restraint), *dāna* (charity) and *dayā* (compassion) respectively, as virtues. Śaṅkara's explanation of who the *devas, manuṣyas* and *asuras* are, is interesting. He thus says that those who are basically virtuous but are tempted by desire (*kāma*) are the *devas* among men, *manuṣyas* are the ones who are greedy and *asuras* are men who are subject to anger, which can lead them to cruel acts. In recognizing them to practice specific virtuous acts, the *Upaniṣad* exhibits a rare perception of human weaknesses and strengths and prescribes *dama, dāna* and *dayā* as moral guidelines.[26]

When we read the other *Upaniṣads* we find that there are introduced a number of new guidelines even while retaining the old morality for leading a virtuous life. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (Chānd.Up.) extols the virtues of *yajña*, knowledge seeking by study of scriptures (*adhyayanam)*, charity (*dānam*), and self-restraint (*tapaḥ*).[27] There is direct mention of the *brahmacaryāśrama* and an implicit reference to the householder here, and they are promised a meritorious after-life for leading a *dhārmic* life (*ete puṇyalokā bhavanti*).

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (Taitt.Up.) is perhaps unique in containing a number of guidelines for moral behavior. While reiterating the 'telos' of *ṛta*, the *Upaniṣad* further emphasizes not only self instruction or acquiring knowledge as a virtue, but also teaching others in the community, as a virtue[28]. Self discipline and self restraint in the form of control of the outer and inner organs are insisted upon. Of the five debts the debt to humans is now spelt out as both hospitality and social good conduct.[29] The refrain to learn and teach is added to every sentence in this section, thus informing us the value of educating future generations in the accepted mode of moral behavior. What is interesting in the Taitt.Up. is that some of the passages address themselves purely to a worldly context without necessarily connecting them in an eschatological sense. Thus the section I.11.1-4 is addressing itself to a *brahmacārī* (student) who is about to go out into the world after his education, and is like a modern convocation address. I give below in translation the relevant instructions from the *guru*, which are prescriptive, for leading a moral life.[30]

> Speak the truth. Observe *dharma*. Do not neglect the pursuit of knowledge. Treat your mother as a *deva*. Treat your father as a *deva*. Treat your teacher as a *deva*. Treat guests as *devas*. Follow only those actions of ours that are praiseworthy and not others. Charity should

be given with faith. Do not give without faith. Give plenty and give with humility. If you are in doubt regarding an action or regarding behavior, follow those *brāhmaṇas* (wise ones) who are there, who are capable of deliberating cogently (*sammarśinaḥ – vicārakṣamāḥ*), who are dedicated to their duties and who follow the customs; who are not cruel and who are devoted to *dharma* i.e., who are not victims of desire (*akāmahatāh*) (translation my own).

These are some of the instructions given to a *brahmacārī*, who is entering the world and one can see that some more interpretations are being provided, for the earlier five debts. The duty to continue the race, respect for elders and the teacher, charity along with the right attitude of humility and not arrogance that should accompany any charitable act, the modesty on the part of the teacher to admit that even the teacher need not be followed blindly but only his good deeds are to be emulated, and of course the advice to be guided by the wise men in society whenever one is in doubt, are all virtues which are relevant for all times. The Taitt. Up. is also a unique text to point out that it is not possible to measure human happiness. While the passage in question i.e., II .8. 1- 4[31] is intended to glorify the bliss of the knower of *brahman*, the message it conveys is that there is no end to the concept of happiness as it is a relative concept.

Another important *Upaniṣad* that has ethical prescriptions is the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* (Kaṭha. Up.) which has many similarities with the later *Bhagavadgītā*. This *Upaniṣad* raises the question of virtue and vice in terms of what happens after the death of a person and tries to argue for a life that is good (*śreyaḥ*) contrasted with that which is merely pleasant (*preyaḥ*).[32] The two words *śreyaḥ* (good) and *preyaḥ* (pleasant) are significant. *Preyaḥ* does not denote hedonistic pleasure but as Śaṅkara hints in his commentary, *preyaḥ* is the dhārmic path chosen for the sake of *abhyudaya* (well being) in this world and hereafter.[33] It is how one directs one's emotions and feelings towards *śreyaḥ* or *preyaḥ* that determines who is seeking *mokṣa* and who is opting for *dharma* respectively. There is also an exhortation of the virtue of self -control in the Kaṭha.Up. using the picture of a chariot drawn by horses, compared to the senses. The reins are compared to the mind and the charioteer who wields the reins, to the intellect. Thus the individual is cautioned not to give in to the inclinations of the senses, without any self- restraint.[34]

The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (Muṇḍ. Up.) like the *Īśopanisad* (Īśa. Up.) has sections extolling the path of *dharma*.[35] The Muṇḍ. Up. proclaims that Truth alone Triumphs and not Untruth[36] and in a telling message declares that 'desire' is the root of *saṃsāra*. While earlier we noticed the Taitt. Up. talking about the relativity of the feeling of happiness (bliss), the Muṇḍ. Up. proclaims that only one without desires can hope to attain ultimate bliss.[37] It occurs in the context of the description of a *jīvanmukta* (one liberated while still embodied). Delinked from that ideal it points to two things: (1) that one desire leads to another and another without exhausting itself and (2) only when a state of 'no desire' is reached will there be ultimate happiness. Almost like Kant who enjoins us 'to seek not to be happy but to be deserving of happiness' the Muṇḍ. Up. enjoins a state of desirelessness in order to deserve ultimate happiness. Thus, it presents a state of ultimate bliss as being without desires. The Īśa. Up. goes a step further and anticipates the *Bhagavadgītā* when it says, in its very first verse, that the world is enveloped by Īśa and therefore one is asked

to enjoy the world with a sense of detachment.[38] This will eventually be spelt out later, by the *Bhagavadgītā*, in its theory of *niṣkāmakarma* which is a hermeneutic exercise of the first order. However, that is beyond the scope of this paper as it falls in the later period.

Six students Sukeśin, Satyakāma, Gārgya, Kauśalya, Bhārgava and Kabandhi approach Pippalāda and seek ultimate knowledge from Pippalāda in the *Praśnopaniṣad.* Pippalāda asks them to lead a virtuous life for a whole year practicing self-discipline (*tapaḥ*), self restraint (*brahmacarya*) and faith (*śraddhā*), so that they become fit for the higher knowledge.[39] Thus the *Praśnopaniṣad* does not let us forget the basic moral qualities of faith, self-discipline and self-restraint.

The *Maitrāyaṇī* (Mait. Up.) the *Śvetāśvatara* (Śvet.) and the *Māṇḍūkya* (Māṇḍ) *Upaniṣads* are later than the ones we have discussed above. The Mait.Up. is important for its section on Yoga[40] where sense control is extolled as a virtue and the pure mind is described as that which is freed from desire.[41]

While Śaṇkara, the advaitin, propounded a philosophy of non-duality based on the *Upaniṣads*, and also declared that knowledge alone will achieve *mokṣa*, discarding a combination of action with knowledge, the *Upaniṣads*, when read by themselves, lay down rules of conduct for those who pursue *dharma* (*pravṛtti*), as well as for those who desire *mokṣa* (*nivṛtti*). And it is in the manner in which one becomes fit for *dharma* that we saw a number of guidelines laid down for moral behavior.

It is now necessary to briefly examine how the value of *mokṣa* brought in some changes in the emphasis of certain moral rules of behavior in Upaniṣadic society. Even when the *Upaniṣads* declare that *vidyā* (knowledge) which informs dhārmic behavior is an inferior kind of *vidyā* (*aparā vidyā*) as opposed to that which teaches higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*) leading to *mokṣa*,[42] that is more in the rhetoric than in actual fact. The moral training was similar for both the goals of *dharma* and *mokṣa* , which were spelt out as charity, self-control, truth, *tapaḥ* etc. Commenting on Īśa.Up. 15, where the aspirant is praying to the sun (*Pūṣan*) to reveal the Truth hidden behind it to one devoted to truth (*satyadharmāya*), Śaṅkara glosses the word '*satyadharmāya*' as 'One who is *satyadharma* because of meditating on Truth' and alternately as 'One who has rightfully performed *dharma*'.[43] Thus the 'Truth', by implication, is revealed to both the follower of the higher path of meditation or the performer of *dharma*.

As the stage of renunciation (*saṃnyāsāśrama*) was, in general, the last of the *āśramas* after going through *brahmacarya* (studentship) and *gṛhastha* (householder), the 'ethos' or the moral laws imbibed during the initial staying in those stages were part and parcel of the ethical virtues which both *dharma* and *mokṣa* aspirants had in common. The powerful example of Yājñavalkya in the Bṛ. Up. stands before us as the ideal; he is a person who gradually progresses through the different stages of life. Even if some special person opted for *saṃnyāsa* without going through the *gṛhastha* stage, he still had to go through *brahmacarya* and thus no one was exempt from the first stage, wherein were already laid the foundations of a moral behavior.

Some special rules of behavior which got added emphasis in the context of *mokṣa* and in the context of the theory of *karma*, were the selfless performance of action,

an inculcation of the sense of equality in the wake of the identity between the *ātman* and *brahman*, and a devaluation of the sense of 'ego' (*ahaṅkāra*). *Ahaṅkāra* or the sense of ego that alienates one from all other living beings is roundly condemned and the truth of Unity is repeatedly emphasized.[44] It is the 'tyranny of egoism' that prevents one from having a genuine feeling of 'love for all' and therefore the cultivation of a sense of identity with other beings that constitute the world, became a moral value. Similarly, self-restraint was raised to a high status in this climate, though it was not unimportant in the *yajña/dharma* milieu as well. After all there were many rules to be observed for the correct performance of *yajñas* and, therefore, there would have to be practice of restraint on one's natural inclinations. So the twin virtues of 'non-egoism' and 'self-restraint' or self-denial (*vairāgya*) attained paramount importance as moral virtues in the context of *mokṣa*. However, the total, exhaustive nature of self-denial (*saṃnyāsa*), that was required of an aspirant for *mokṣa* is noteworthy. By linking the last *puruṣārtha* (human goal) i.e., *mokṣa*, with the last stage of *saṃnyāsa (saṃnyāsāśrama),* self-denial or renunciation was total in every sense of the term, as far as the individual was concerned. One had to abdicate attachment to one's family (*putraiṣaṇā*), to society (*lokaiṣaṇā*) and to wealth in any form (*vittaiṣaṇā*). These are the desires that are most difficult to overcome and are set before a *mumukṣu* (one desiring *mokṣa)* as the path to the ultimate value.[45] Such exalted standards of moral behaviour was in keeping with the highest value that the Upaniṣadic society visualized for itself. Whether such a vision can coexist with moral behaviour in the world of daily existence seems to the Indian mind a redundant question. However, there have been thinkers in the west who have questioned the very presence of morality in such a worldview.

I come back to the question raised earlier as to whether there can be any moral behaviour in an individualistic 'telos' seeking to actualize itself. In this context I am reminded of Prof. Zaehner's concern of the blurring of the boundaries between good and evil in the Upaniṣadic philosophy, which emphasizes only the reality of the One *Brahman* and its identity with *ātman*.[46] Zaehner follows in the tradition of western philosophers in general, starting with Hegel, for whom only a metaphysics based on duality makes sense. As this is a serious question I think it is my moral duty to try and answer it and in the process try to explain how there can be a moral philosophy in the *Upaniṣads* even though it believes in an Unitive Vision.

It is good to remind ourselves that the *saṃnyāsin*, in the traditional accepted sense, has gradually come to adopt the last stage of *saṃnyāsa* and thus is one who has already imbibed the moral virtues of the culture in the previous *āśramas*. Except in exceptional cases, as pointed out earlier in the paper, he is the one who has lived a moral life in accordance with the rules of *brahmacarya* and *gṛhastha*. Even in the exceptional cases when one adopts the last *saṃnyāsāśrama* like Śaṅkara for instance, the person would have gone through *brahmacarya*, wherein are laid the foundations of moral life. Thus the *saṃnyāsin*, having gone through that stage, knows what is morally good and what is not. Therefore there is no blurring of boundaries as Zaehner would have us believe.

The late B.K.Matilal has also dealt with this question in his *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism* and, in what follows, I am summarizing his views. It

has always been emphasized as Matilal says, that one cannot gain liberating knowledge without having lived a perfectly moral life.[47] What this means in a rhetorical manner is that 'when one realizes the ultimate reality (the cosmic consciousness), the good-evil distinction sloughs off as an inessential and unnecessary detail, for evil has been overcome and without evil, good loses its original meaning'.[48] Matilal distinguishes between the ordinary distinction between good and evil in the world, and the symbiotic relation that exists between good and evil in ordinary life which exist intimately related to each other like light and darkness; thus they stand together or fall together. This good he calls as $good_1$ and when evil is eliminated $good_1$ is also destroyed.[49] At that stage called variously as *mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, etc., $good_2$ makes its presence felt, which is the ultimate good. He uses many more examples to illustrate this truth. In substance, he emphasizes that our worldly behaviour only operates within the realm of $good_1$ and also points out that in order to reach $good_2$ one has to go through $good_1$. At the level of $good_2$ the previous duality of good and evil no longer prevails and there is only oneness of reality. One can therefore argue that the dualism of good and evil ceases to be operative in $good_2$. This is precisely what the *Upaniṣads* point to when they say 'What delusion and sorrow can there be for one who sees Oneness'.[50]

The same idea is expressed somewhat differently by Billington[51]. He thus says that the state of liberation is not that it leads to disregard of benevolence to other sentient beings but that benevolent acts-and any others that may be termed morally desirable-are viewed as an intuitive expression of the experience of oneness with all beings, rather than as a painstaking observance of rules for which rational arguments may be offered. This is a deeper level of experience then the dualistic state, which is the 'context of moral decision making'.[52]

This brief sojourn, above, into the world of the early *Upaniṣads* has revealed how there was a close connection established between moral behavior and the realization of the 'essence of what it means to be human'. This connection was made possible because of the nature of the *bandhutā* theory that developed and reached its full growth by the time of the Brāhmaṇa texts and was the legacy of the *Upaniṣads* as well. This was an interpretive device perfected by the late Vedic period. *Bandhutā* is the 'belief in the presence of some subtle, secret, and mystic bond connecting a thing and its *bandhus* and the *bandhus* amongst themselves'[53] The unitive principle of *ṛta* had already initiated the beginnings of the conviction that 'the structural constitution of the human being discloses the very structure of the world'.[54] Therefore, the belief in a 'telos' like *ṛta/dharma* or *Ātman/Brahman*, made it possible to regulate one's moral life in such a way as to realize the 'telos' which one in essence 'Is'.

I have tried to present the ethical virtues, as gleaned from some of the early *Upaniṣads*, and to situate moral behavior within a 'telos' and within an 'ethos'. I have also pointed to the many ways in which the Ṛgvedic sages tried to bring the *ṛta/dharma/mokṣa* 'telos' within the range of human understanding. The *Upaniṣads* try to make sense of *dharma* in many ways. We already saw how the Bṛ.Up. relates it to the dictates of conscience for right action. In other places like the Taitt.Up., in the instruction to the *brahmacārī*, we got the sense that when the student follows those instructions he was acting in a dhārmic way. The Chānd.Up. credits one with

vijñāna (discriminate discernment) to be able to intuit what is *dharma, adharma*, truth, falsehood, what is good and what is bad etc.[55] Thus there is a serious attempt in these early *Upaniṣads* to find a basis for right moral conduct.

In the search for the source of moral conduct, philosophers and religious thinkers in all cultures are baffled as to the origins of the concept of good and good moral behavior. Questions like whether morality depends on the right and able exercise of man's rational powers which can enable him to choose between virtuous and non-virtuous actions[56], or whether it is possible to conceive of a normative moral standard by the exercise of man's rational powers for all times similar to the norms of mathematical rules, will continue to plague humanity as long as it lives. In areas like this, where human reason failed to provide a satisfactory answer there has developed a belief in a 'telos' in some cultures, which informs what the correct behavior ought to be in order to be in tune with that. There have been different theories put forward for this dependence on a 'telos' for moral behavior by many philosophers. I conclude this paper with one such theory by G.C.Pande.[57]

> Conceptually [ṛta] may be assimilated to Natural Law, at once cosmic, moral and ritualistic. It must be remembered that the distinction effected by modern thought between being, and being right and of both from being in accordance with rite or law did not obtain in that earlier period. The modern distinction, in fact, arises from the distinction between knowledge and will, the latter being free to follow any fiat within the bounds of desire and impulse which are regarded as non-rational. On this view the will becomes arbitrary or non-rationally determined and thus the principles which it follows cease to have any reason or connection with reason, just as the latter remains concerned only with the nature of things and contains no directive principle for the will. The ancient [period including the period of the early *Upaniṣads*] had a richer conception of reason which made it reveal facts as well as values, 'natural' as well as moral laws.

Perhaps one can conclude with the thought that a teleological worldview of the self can most likely help in the avoidance of extreme forms of individualism, that has, for instance, corrupted the moral structures of many societies since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Notes

1 Austin B. Creel, *Dharma in Hindu Ethics*, Calcutta: S.P. Ghosh, Firma KLM Private Ltd, 1977, p. 21
2 Ray Billington, *Understanding Eastern Philosophy*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 153
3 Bernard Gert, *Morality: Its Nature and Justification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 13
4 Thaddeus Metz,"The Meaning of Life" in *Ethics*, Vol. 112. No. 4, The University of Chicago Press, July 2002, p. 810
5 Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1966, p. 5
6 Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the history of an idea*, New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1960, p. 34
7 ibid.
8 MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 1
9 G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol. I., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, p. 24
10 Rajendra Pandeya "The Vision of the Vedic Seer" in K. Sivaraman, *Hindu Spirituality*, p. 6
11 Rg Veda VI.50.2

[12] Ṛtam ca satyam cābhīddhāt tapaso'dhyajāyata ṛta and Truth were born of burning Tapas
[13] R V. X.117.6
[14] Ibid., X.191
[15] Munis with the wind for their girdle,
Wear the soiled yellow robe;
They go along the course of the wind,
Where the Devas have gone before. (R V. X.136.2. Trans. by A.C. Bose)
[16] In the ecstasy of Munihood
We have ascended on the wind,
And only these bodies of ours,
Are what you mortals ever see. (R V. X.136.2. Trans. by A.C. Bose)
[17] M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1951, p. 37
[18] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads*, I.4.11–17
[19] Ibid., 4.4.22
[20] S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy* Vol. 2, The Creative Period, Poona: Bilvakunja Publishing House, 1927, p. 135
[21] dvividho hi vedokto dharmaḥ pravṛttilakṣaṇo nivṛttilaksaṇaḥ ca.
[22] Bṛ. Up. I.4.14
[23] dharmaṁ tadetat śreyorūpam śrṣṭam kṣatrasya kṣatram kṣatrasyāpi niyantṛ, ugrādapyugram. Śāṅkarabhāṣya on Bṛ. Up. I.4.14
[24] M. Hiriyanna has an excellent discussion on dharma in *Indian Conception of Values*, pp 160–167
[25] Bṛ. Up. I.4.16
[26] Bṛ. Up. 5.2.1–3
[27] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2.23.1
[28] svādhyāyapravacane ca. This is repeated 12 times in this anuvāka of 16 lines. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I.9
[29] Mānuṣamiti laukikaḥ saṃvyavahāraḥ. Śaṅkara on Taitt. Up. I.9
[30] Satyaṁ vada, dharmam cara, svādhyāyānmā pramadaḥ, . . . mātṛdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava, ācārya-devo bhava, atithidevo bhava, . . . yānyasmākam sucaritāni tāni tvayopāsyāni, no itarāṇi, . . . śraddhayā deyam, ásraddhayādeyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, . . . atha yadi te karmavicikitsā va vṛttavicikitsā vā syāt, ye tatra brāhmaṇāḥ sammarśinaḥ, . . . alūkṣā dharmakāmāḥ syuḥ yathā te tatra varteran, tathā tatra vartethāḥ . . . Taitt. Up. I.11.1–4
[31] Thus it gradually builds up a relative theory of bliss, starting with humans and ending with the final Brahman bliss.
[32] *Kaṭhopaniṣad Upaniṣad*, I.2.2
[33] preyaḥ śreyasorhi abhyudayāmṛtatvārthī puruṣaḥ pravartate. Śaṅkara on II.1
[34] ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ rathameva tu.
buddhiṁ tu sārathim viddhi manaḥ pragrahameva ca.
indriyāṇi hayānāhurviṣayāṁsteṣu gocarān.
ātmendriyamanoyuktam bhoktetyāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ. Kath. Up. I.3.3–4
[35] *Muṇḍakopaniṣad Upaniṣad*, I.2.1–6; *Īśopaniṣad Upaniṣad*, 2
[36] satyameva jayate nānṛtam (Muṇḍ. Up. III.1.6) is the motto of India adopted after Independence.
[37] Muṇḍ. Up. III.2.2
[38] Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat
tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam. Īśa. Up. 1
[39] . . . tapasā brahmacaryeṇa śraddhayā saṃvatsaram samvatsyātha yathākāmam praśnān pṛcchata. . . *Praśnopaniṣad*, I.2.2
[40] *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad*, VI.18–21
[41] mano hi dvividham proktam śuddham cāśuddhameva ca.
aśuddham kāmasamparkāt śuddham kāmavivarjitam. ibid. VI.34
[42] . . . dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti, parā caivāparā ca. Muṇḍ. Up. I.1.5
[43] . . . satyadharmāya tava satyasyopāsanātsatyam dharmo yasya mama . . . athavā, yathābhūtasya dharmasyānuṣṭhātre . . . Śaṅkara on Īśa. Up. 15
[44] Bṛ. Up. II.4.14; IV.5.15
[45] Bṛ. Up. III.5.1; IV.4.22

[46] B.K. Matilal, *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism*, An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 4
[47] Ibid., p. 26
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., pp. 26–29
[50] Isa. Up. 7
[51] Ray Billington, op. cit., p. 159
[52] Ibid.
[53] Belvalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 62–67
[54] Rajendra Pandeya, "The Vision of the Vedic Seer", p. 15
[55] Chānd. Up. VII.7.1
[56] MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 62
[57] G.C.Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, pp. 24–25

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Engagement with Sanskrit Philosophic Texts

Stephen H. Phillips

This chapter has two parts, first a pedagogical complaint that will serve to introduce part two which concerns indological and philosophical hermeneutics. The first part is focused on a particular problem with English translations that do not acknowledge how the Sanskrit texts have been understood by Sanskrit commentators and others in the classical culture. The second part presents a general characterization of the methods of indology and of philosophy, and shows how in one sense, not appreciated by some within indology, philosophic engagement trumps context and placement of a work within a stream of intellectual history.

Part One

In trying to teach Vedānta as a philosophy or religious world view, more precisely, as a set of related world views—for each subschool of Vedānta presents a fully organized and distinct perspective—one has to talk about the Upaniṣads. These are texts that legions of Vedāntic philosophers insist are authoritative for a range of questions about reality and the place of the human being in the universe. Furthermore, in the classical period, which extends from the grammarian Pāṇini (c. 500 B.C.E. or a little later) almost to our own day (i.e., in Sanskrit-medium schools), all parties writing in Sanskrit, including non-Vedāntic philosophers (e.g., Naiyāyikas and indeed Buddhists and others outside the fold of Vedic culture), presuppose familiarity with a certain group of Upaniṣads. These ten or twelve or thirteen texts are easily available in Sanskrit, and in English translation, too. This is doubtless connected to the fact that one form of Vedānta or another is the official philosophy of several important contemporary religious institutions referred to broadly as Hindu.

Independent commentaries and readings of the *Brahmasūtra*, the early systemization of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads that is ambiguous in key sūtras, number many more than three. But on the contemporary scene, the three subschools founded by Śaṅkara, Rāmājuna, and Madhva, known respectively as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvata,

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and Dvaita Vedānta, appear far and away the most prominent. Now collections of the ten or twelve or thirteen "principal" Upaniṣads in Sanskrit, which are in print and purchasable by a Sanskrit reader today (often thanks to editorial and publishing efforts by people belonging to one or another of the three groups), have invariably the short *Īśā Upaniṣad* (eighteen verses) appearing first. And in the first verse of that Upaniṣad, a verbal adjective, a gerundive, stands out as inviting both a non-theistic (Advaita) and a theistic (Viśiṣṭādvata or Dvaita) reading. That is to say, not only the word *īśā* ("by the Lord") but also—in the very opening line of this the first Upaniṣad in the standard order, *īśāvāsyam idam sarvam* ("All this is by the Lord *āvāsya*")—the Lord's status, what the Lord does in relation to everything, *āvāsya*, can be variously read: *āvāsya*, (1.) "to be covered, to be clothed by," (2.) "to be dwelled in," or (3.) "to be perfumed/pervaded by," depending on whether the word is etymologically derived from *ā-vas* (*ācchādane*, "cover, put on clothing"), *ā-vas* (*nivāse*, "dwell in"), or *ā-vasaya* (*saurabhye*, "pervade by odor, perfume").[1] The Advaita reading of Śaṅkara and company views the word's etymology differently from the theistic readings of the proponents of the two other major subschools.

In the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition, Vedānta Deśika (c. 1300) in a commentary on the *Īśā Upaniṣad* acknowledges the ambiguity of *āvāsya*. The great theist admits the possibility of the Advaita "pervaded"[2] (which can be arrived at either from etymology 1 or 3 above). The explicit gloss of Śaṅkara (c. 700) is "to be covered" by which he understands that everything is pervaded by Brahman, the Lord, the One, the Self.[3] Vedānta Deśika cites a verse that merges that meaning with the sense of *vasati* ("dwells"): the Lord, indwelling everywhere, rules the universe.[4] The modern theist, Aurobindo, considering three senses, reads the verse similarly, "All this is for habitation by the Lord," and devotes a long footnote to disputing the Advaita interpretation.[5] Other theistic commentators also read the word differently from Śaṅkara: "Everything is *indwelt* by the Lord," or "The Lord *puts on* everything *as his clothing*." The Lord is an inner ruler, ruling real and diverse people and things, whereas in the Advaita view the appearance of diversity is illusory. True self-awareness, which is self-illumining, admits no content other than itself, according to Advaita, whereas according to the theists an individual's self-awareness is not the same as the Lord's. And so on.

"This whole world is to be dwelt in by the Lord" reads the translation by Patrick Olivelle, published by Oxford University Press with annotation and the Sanskrit text in hardback and, in a forerunner with less annotation and no Sanskrit, in paperback.[6] This translation, which may or may not be correct contemporaneously, that is to say, more than two thousand years ago and long before the commentaries by Śaṅkara and the rest, makes unavailable the scholastic controversy even from the theistic side. Both Vedānta Deśika and Madhva at least acknowledge their Advaita rival.[7] Olivelle in a note mentions indological discussions of the verse (by Paul Thieme and others) but not any by classical scholars.[8] One might think Śaṅkara was an idiot or perversely ideological in his interpretation. And without other sources of information, centuries of understanding of the verse by astute classical thinkers would be closed.

An even more egregious instance of the failure occurs in Olivelle's rendering of the *tat tvam asi* of the *Chāndogya*. The problem has to do with his audience, which, I assume, is not comprised solely, or even mainly, of indologists wanting to understand the "original" meaning. Pretty obviously, the audience's size is driven by Vedānta's success as a philosophy, or philosophies, both in the classical and modern periods. When we read not, as with Śaṅkara and thousands of readers classically trained, "Thou art That (the Self, the Brahman, the Absolute), O Śvetaketu," but, "And that's how you are, Śvetaketu,"[9] it is impossible to grasp—the meaning is closed off from us—why this text has reverberated throughout Sanskrit literature and indeed presentations of Upaniṣadic teachings in English and other languages. Whether the reading is "correct" or not as understood by either speaker or hearer "originally" is almost irrelevant, paling in comparison with our need to know how it is and has been understood by literally thousands upon thousands of Vedāntins and indeed non-Vedāntins. Admittedly, the classical authors are sometimes oversystematic, finding coherence among views across Upaniṣads that seems superimposed. But an effort to determine an old meaning should not come at the cost of closing off a text's profundity as judged by a whole tradition of Sanskrit "hearings" and understandings by, especially, in this case, Advaita followers of Śaṅkara. After all, it is possible to read the text in different ways.

The theistic commentators are able to see Śaṅkara's interpretation. A reference to the *Chāndogya* verse attributed to the Dvaitin, Madhva, in the fifteenth-century textbook *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, "Compendium of All the Philosophic Views," is worth mentioning for its striking demonstration of the point. Madhva, who believes that God, the Lord, the Brahman, is fundamentally transcendent and other to both individual souls and things inanimate, is quoted by the author Mādhava, who is ever the clever expositor, as reading the line as, "You are *not* That (the Absolute, the Brahman)," with euphonic combination, *saṃdhi*, accounting for a submerged *a*, which means "not."

> Or to propose another explanation of the text, *ātmā tat tvam asi*, That art thou, it may be divided, *ātmā* ***a****tat tvam asi* [Not-that art thou].[10]

To get the joke, one has to be aware of the Advaita understanding of the words as "Thou art That." Similarly, we, to appreciate why Madhva, the radical theist and opponent of Advaita, says what he does have to know the Advaita reading.

Finally, I confess that habit makes it difficult for me to see the Sanskrit as Olivelle sees it, though he provides an explanation in a note. The argument is that the preceding noun, presumed wrongly to be grammatically the antecedent of *tat* is *ātman*, not *brahman*, and the former word is masculine in gender, not neuter like *brahman*. In Sanskrit, pronouns agree in gender with their antecedents, and so, if the preceding word *ātmā* were the antecedent of *tat* (in *tat tvam asi*), the line should read *sa tvam asi*, since *sa* is masculine and *tat* neuter.[11]

There are four things I wish to say in response to this argument. First, we can understand ungrammatical sentences. In everyday conversation, we barely notice, if at all, when a person makes a grammatical slip. So long as other syntactic connectives

are in place, a mistake of gender agreement in particular—as all know who have tried to speak a language whose nouns carry the tagging—need hardly hinder comprehension, though it may sound inelegant. This means that certain grammatical deviations are available for other purposes, such as poetic effect. Second, the language of the Upaniṣads is in many places directed to another purpose than truth-telling. This is apparent in the false etymologies given throughout the long *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and elsewhere that are very funny. And then there is the tradition of the Vedic mantra. Passages in the texts sound mantric, that is to say, sound as though they are mnemonic phrases, short and alliterative (*tat tvam asi* shows both consonance and alliteration, which would be lost by *sa tvam asi*), meant for meditation in an effort of self-discovery and change of consciousness, not of belief. Third, there is a tradition in India of viewing the supreme being as "beyond gender," and, in perhaps a conflation of grammatical and sexual categories, the word *tat* is said to be used in a fourth gender (beyond masculine, feminine, and neuter) to pick it out.[12]

Fourth, though I believe it is better to read the line as ungrammatical than in Olivelle's manner, the anaphor could have its antecedent in the word *sat* ("Being") which occurs at 6.2.1 *Chāndogya*. Here the topic is set for the section, and the controversial pronoun occurs only seven short *khaṇḍ as* later (with about six or seven sentences per *khaṇḍ as*, per "subsection"). It occurs within the same section or chapter as the *tat* of *tat tvam asi*, the same *prapāṭhaka* (the *Chāndogya* has a total of nine of these).[13] That *sat* is not beyond the reach of our *tat*. Topical anaphors are common in classical philosophy, and no antecedent has to be stated other than the section or chapter title (*atha X-prakaraṇa*), or, an opening mention that can be picked up and referred to by an anaphor occurring dozens of sentences later. In this usage, there is no requirement that a pronoun pick up the most immediately available noun. The overall topic sets the referent, and the topic of the sixth chapter or Prapāṭhaka of the *Chāndogya* is *sat* (which is the very first word of 6.2.1, thus added emphasis). Possibly, it is *brahman* (which is what this *sat* means).[14] Both *sat* and *brahman* are words that are neuter in gender.

The bottom line is that the grammar of *tat* does not close off all meanings other than Olivelle's "how (you are)," as is proved by the classical readings. This is historicism that is subtle and masked as faithful scholarship.[15] I am not saying that Olivelle is simply wrong—at least not yet, though I shall come back to the point at the end, after reviewing the genre of Sanskrit philosophy—but rather that he has failed a wider duty. The Upaniṣads beg for ideative contextualization and commentary, and Olivelle cuts us off from all classical explication.

Most unfortunately, such an "historicist fallacy" is not uncommon. It vitiates many pages of Olivelle's work and those of like-minded indologists who have published translations, to move to another text, of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. I am not saying that mining out a contemporaneous reading is not a worthy pursuit. It is a good thing to try to understand, for example, the *Gītā* in the context of the *Mahābhārata* as a whole, and divorced from the scholastic apologetics of Śaṅkara and the other Sanskrit commentators who sometimes anachronistically read something in. Nevertheless, the classical commentaries should not be ignored. Indeed, they often include invaluable insights that cannot be ruled out as part of the meaning. Moreover, as

with the Upaniṣads, their understandings form important moments in the Vedāntic traditions that make almost all of us interested in the *Gītā* in the first place. There is nothing wrong with approaching the *Gītā* as a Vedāntic text such that how it has been understood is just what we want to know. The *Yogasūtra* is a difficult text where, too, the classical commentaries may well diverge from the "original" meaning of the sūtras in some instances but which nevertheless are crucial to determining what the sūtras do mean. Doubtless old Buddhist texts with commentaries present a similar tension, though this is a bit outside my bailiwick. My point is that sometimes we have to have explanations of divergent interpretations. The translator serves as a bridge for a diverse audience. Of course, translation is not a science but a craft with many pitfalls, and I want to reserve my remarks on rules—in consideration of Sanskrit philosophic texts—for this chapter's part two. However, let me point out a fatal flaw in a popular translation of the *Gītā*.

In an English translation of the *Gītā* in a paperback edition that is widely available and inexpensive, Barbara Stoler Miller renders *brahman*, which is the Sanskrit word for the Absolute or God and of course a central term of controversy, as "infinite spirit."[16] The word has been anglicized as "Brahman" and this is the word that should be used. No other word has the right combination of resonance and vagueness, permitting us to appreciate, specifically, the world view of the *Gītā* and, more generally, the distinct interpretations of the Vedāntic subschools. Like Olivelle, Miller tries to comprehend the sentences of the *Gītā* independently of classical interpretations. Fortunately, she supplies a glossary of key English terms, such as, to be sure, "infinite spirit," which she translates back into Sanskrit with notes that do indicate the importance of the term. But she should use the word "Brahman." Instead of "discipline," to mention another mistake of the same type, she should use "yoga," since that word, too, has been anglicized. But enough with specific complaints. Let us turn to certain general issues of indological versus philosophic method.

Part Two

First, I want to make clear that my methodological remarks do not apply to all genre of Sanskrit literature. The question of the extent to which they apply to the Upaniṣads or the *Gītā* is a bit beyond my purview, though I make a comment about the Upaniṣads at the end. Clearly they do not apply to *kāvya* or the Veda. The remarks apply mainly to the genre of Sanskrit literature called *darśana*, sometimes *ānvīkṣikī*. They apply to other genre insofar as its texts share the feature of "philosophic" literature of trying to say something true, important, and justified on a topic of controversy. Works of philosophy try to tell us what we should believe and why. This may be a rough criterion but it delineates fairly well the same body of texts—that is, when we add the qualification "in Sanskrit"—that the *Bibliography* of Karl Potter's *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy* specifies. That is to say, it applies to the thousands of Sanskrit texts belonging to the various schools of classical philosophy. I should think that these texts include not only the literature

of the well-known schools, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Nyāya, and the rest, but also earlier literature with philosophic content, such as Upaniṣads and passages in the epics. But the Upaniṣads, etc., lack much self-conscious argumentation and often seem to find virtue in ambiguity, and thus strictly should not be included with the *Nyāyasūtra* and the rest. I have more to say about this at the end. The *Brahmasūtra* does, of course, belong to the genre of philosophy.

There is a reverse dependence with this type of literature than that usually supposed between (1) indological methodology and (2) the properly philosophic approach of engagement. My main contention is that indology unconstrained by recognition of principles of philosophic hermeneutics becomes distortional and misleading.[17]

The goals of indology and philosophy are, of course, distinct, the latter a matter of thinking with the texts in an effort to determine what to believe, the former a matter of placement of a text within an historical stream. An indological reading tries to be sensitive to questions of intellectual and material history. A philosophical reading, in contrast, aims ultimately at evaluation, the deciding of what we should believe on specified topics and why, normally the very topics addressed by the Sanskrit text being studied. The philosophic approach is a kind of presentism, making the text, no matter what its antiquity, party to contemporary debates. The indological approach, in contrast, tries ideally to be neutral, or, as is sometimes said, brackets questions of truth in line with a phenomenological effort to be faithful to the text as it was originally meant.

Despite such difference of aim, engagement with Sanskrit philosophic texts depends, rather obviously, on indology, assuming that Sanskrit philology belongs to the latter discipline. Sound philology necessarily precedes philosophy in the sense that, in the case of a typical philosophic text, one has to know a little grammar as well as technical terms and how to render compounds. But this is the case today, when only a very few classical texts, all told, have been translated. Eventually, it should be possible for a non-sanskritist philosopher to make a contribution to the study of even a late classical text. In that case, the philology of *others* would have preceded the philosophic endeavor.

Now it is less frequently realized that sound philology with respect to a Sanskrit philosophical text requires more than Sanskrit ability. It requires, to begin with, familiarity with intellectual context, since background theories, with any text, are often alluded to, presupposed, or otherwise relevant. So much, like knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, is uncontroversial. But there is also a further requirement and a dependence relation between indology and philosophy that runs in the reverse direction. It has to do with coherent content, not form, and not history.

Reading philosophy requires one to hold positions in mind and see logical relations among them. Argument goes a long way to defining philosophy, argument potentially drawing on all parts of a view, or views, and aware of what is and is not accepted. This is not an abstract point. It shows up concretely on the grammatical level with propositional anaphor and, with many, many works, an implicit discourse structure. In such statements as "That (what you said) is wrong," one has to be able

to summarize a position and have a sense of argumentative relevance to supply the antecedent of the pronoun. Similarly, the discourse structure of philosophic texts (the division into *pūrvapakṣa* and *siddhānta* is a prime example) requires a sense of logical relation and the pragmatics not just of conversation but of debate. A student who wants to read Sanskrit philosophy would be well advised to take a course on logic and critical thinking. Although classical India has its own rich discussion of informal fallacies, that there be nothing Indian on the syllabus wouldn't matter a bit. Without a sense of the tools of philosophic debate, implicit contentions of "unwanted consequence" (*anupapatti*), "counterexample" (*vyabhicāra*), "unwarranted premise" (*asiddhi*), and so on might be missed. The structure of a Sanskrit philosophic treatise is typically dialogic with at least two voices (*pūrvapakṣin* and *siddhāntin*), with the logic of philosophic debate joining them. If this logic is missed, the structure goes uncomprehended and so too the meaning overall.

Furthermore, a sense of the development of classical philosophic thought requires judgment, in particular about the success of earlier positions against the attacks of rivals. Philosophy builds on itself. And philosophy in late classical times has so much built on a sense of which earlier arguments have been successful and which have failed that not only is a little training in logic required but most importantly practice in philosophic engagement. Classical thinkers practiced philosophic engagement with the texts they inherited, and by our own thinking about whether what is said is true, and for what reasons, we train ourselves to see why ideas moved in the directions they do. Therefore, accurate intellectual history is dependent on the method of philosophy. For, our authors are trying to say something true and warranted on an issue of importance in dispute. Without appreciating the concerns, how could we possibly understand the contentions?

The education required does not concern the material culture of India but is, rather, of a peculiarly philosophic variety. As I have argued in another publication, cultures are bundles of *non-mutually entailing* practices, such as bowling and wine-tasting, ghazals and mandi.[18] There are no coherence relations that tie a cultural periphery to a core. The practices of philosophy in classical India have infinitely more to do with the practices of philosophy in the West than they do with, say, music.

One has to keep in mind that what classical philosophers themselves are concerned with—the nature of sense perception and inference, whether universals are real and the meaning of general terms, even self-awareness, and so on—are issues about our comprehension of the world, or reality, albeit often a presumed common psychological or cognitive world with little interest in the physical elements (though there, too, there is significant inquiry). The issues of classical philosophy are by and large not about previous texts, and when they are about previous texts, such as in the case of the Vedāntic attitude towards the Upaniṣads, these texts too are taken to be about, by and large, issues of metaphysics and epistemology. I think this is the deep reason why there is convergence with Western philosophy.

Let me add a personal impression. Traditional Sanskrit pandits in India who have no university training think like philosophers, that is, ahistorically, concerned with

the truth, with what we should accept (*aṅgīkāra*) or believe.[19] For indologists, there is danger, I sense, in self-congratulatory phenomenology, to become unconcerned, in just the ways the classical thinkers are concerned, with what we should believe and why. If there is no willingness to think with the texts, to learn anything from them, philosophy is blocked, and if philosophy is blocked, comprehension goes out the window. For, at a minimum, the texts themselves aim at the achievement of a shared or shareable view transcending history.

Let me broach one more matter before returning to the Upaniṣads and a final point of genre comparison. This concerns the important principle of translation and interpretation of texts often called the principle of charity. Elsewhere I have formulated this as follows.[20] Translators and interpreters should choose the best interpretation. That would be, to begin with, in consideration of philosophic texts, a non-contradictory interpretation. We assume that one would not, except in special circumstances, contradict oneself. Thus, without being able to provide a special explanation, we should not settle for an interpretation that is contradictory. An apparent contradiction makes us look for another interpretation, just as in everyday speech we would either understand an apparent contradiction as a figure of speech or ask our interlocutor just what he or she means. The principle of charity also demands we assume the sincerity of our author, a sense on his part of relevance, as well as, beyond non-contradiction, a sense of overall coherence. We assume he sees explanatory relations among the parts of the view. Indeed, we interpret a philosopher as trying, in any particular instance, to say something true, warranted, and coherent with his or her overall view. Of course, such granting of trustworthiness has to be contextualized. Contextualization has important consequences. For one, it means that a bit of world knowledge commonly assumed in the author's milieu should be attributed to him in the absence of an explicit denial. My contention, however, is that a sense of context has to march together with an equally important sense of coherence. Otherwise, we become prone to the historicist fallacy of seeing parroting and repetition in the place of real reasons and arguments to be appreciated from a first-person point of view.[21]

The goal of the language of the Upaniṣads is, I think, as was suggested in part one, more self-discovery in the sense of the kind of awareness developed in meditation and the practices of yoga than it is philosophic in the sense of argument in discovery or defense of the truth. Or, it is both. The language is provocative, in some instances more like poetry than philosophy. On the other hand, views about reality, human consciousness, God and the world, karma and proper conduct are expressed, or can pretty easily be teased out of even the most enigmatic passages. The genre combines somehow a concern with intellectual truth and provocation of experience. The convergence with poetry in the latter aim explains—let me point out to drive home my complaint of part one—why it is better to take the *tat* of *tat tvam asi* as *ātman* or *sat* (6.2.1 *Chāndogya* which there means "Brahman") than as "how (you are)." Strict grammaticality, I contend, *is* trumped by the alliteration and consonance of the two words at a minimum in this instance, as opposed to (see note 11) *sa tvam asi*. Alternatively, the anaphor could be topical, with the *sat* of the opening of the passage as the antecedent, an idea hovering over the entire stretch

of text. In either case, we can restore the classical reading and make sense of the philosophical discussions that have secured us an audience in the first place. As consumers of Vedānta, we need to be able to see how the line is traditionally read.

Notes

[1] Valerie Roebuck identifies the three senses, and, furthermore, argues that all three meanings may be in play. She makes a point about the language of the Upaniṣads that I shall amplify at the end of part two: ambiguity is a poetic virtue though a logical flaw. See her translation, p. 7, and note 3, p. 390, *The Upaniṣads*—a translation that is, happily, available now in the U.S.

[2] Vedānta Deśika, *Īśāvāsyopaniṣadbhāṣya*. Madras: Ubhaya Vedānta Grantha-mālā, 1970, p. 5.

[3] Śaṅkara, *Īśādidaśopaniṣ adaḥ*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964, p. 2.

[4] Vedānta Deśika, *Īśāvāsyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, p. 6.

[5] Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973, p. 63.

[6] Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 407. Note the placement of the *Īśā* late in the book which arranges Upaniṣads by presumed antiquity. This is standard indological practice, though not followed, e.g., by Roebuck.

[7] Vedānta Deśika, *Īśāvāsyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, pp. 5ff, and Basu (for Madhva's commentary), p. 3.

[8] Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, p. 611. In fact, no classical author that I can find is ever mentioned. Paul Thieme, however, whom Olivelle cites here for his study of the *Īśā*, does acknowledge classical readings, in particular Śaṅkara's, *Īśādidaśopaniṣadaḥ*, pp. 228–38.

[9] Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, p. 253.

[10] E.B, Cowell and A.E. Gough (tr.), *The Sarva-Darsana-Samgraha (of Mādhava)*. New Delhi: Cosmo, 1976, p. 97.

[11] Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, pp. 560–561. Joel Brereton is cited for the grammatical argument which Olivelle summarizes.

[12] For example, in the *Ardhanārīśvarastotram*, a Tantric text whose origins I do not know.

[13] In the edition by J.L. Shastri containing 188 Upanishads printed without intervening commentary, the two words are separated by less than three pages and the pages are only about four inches tall.

[14] Ashok Aklujkar suggested to me in conversation that the antecedent of *tat* could be *brahman*, the idea of Brahman hovering over all the text even though the word does not occur in the immediately preceding sentence or indeed the chapter.

[15] In philosophy of law, there is controversy between "originalists," sometimes called "strict constructionists," who downplay coherence relations, such as Justice Antonin Scalia, on the one hand, and on the other champions of "integrity," such as Ronald Dworkin, e.g., *Law's Empire*. This may be presumptuous, but I should like to point to a certain parallelism between Dworkin's position and mine.

[16] Miller (tr.), *The Bhagavad-Gita*, *passim*. I have used this translation many times in classes requiring students to replace "infinite spirit" with "Brahman."

[17] Similar points were first made by me in "Philosophic India Studies Since Mid-Century in North America."

[18] See my paper, "The Universal in Classical Indian Philosophy."

[19] This is borne out by the dialogue between classical pandits and academic philosophers recorded in *Saṃvāda*, edited by Daya Krishna and others, which moves back and forth between English and Sanskrit on epistemological issues.

[20] *Epistemology of Perception* (with N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya), p. 5.

[21] This I have nailed down in opposition to Erich Frauwallner, an indologist and historicist of some renown, with respect to the New Logician Gaṅgeśa (c. 1300) and his predecessors: *Gaṅgeśa on the Upādhi* (with N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya), pp. 22–30. Suffice it to say that without granting Gaṅgeśa and other great names the charitable view of trying to say what is true for the right reason one could not follow some of the tightest argumentation produced by philosophers in any tradition.

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Truth, Diversity, and the Incomplete Project of Modern Hinduism

Jeffery D. Long

Into the Hornets' Nest: A Hindu Alternative to Hindutva

This constructive philosophical and hermeneutical project seeks to begin the reconception of Neovedāntic thought in order to better approximate modern Hindu aspirations towards universality and pluralism, as well as to facilitate the translation of Hindu categories into the terminology of the modern Western world. Focusing first on such representatives of the Hindu tradition as Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī (the founder of the Ārya Samāj), Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi, I explore the compatibility of their thought with Alfred North Whitehead's system of process thought and Jain philosophy. I then develop a preliminary outline of a pluralistic Hindu process theology.[1]

The compatibility of both Jainism and process thought with Neovedānta will be examined, as well as the ability of a synthesis of all three to articulate, in a way that is both logically elegant and compelling, some of the deeper assumptions underlying the views of modern Hindu thinkers, specifically on the issue of truth and religious diversity.

The larger goal to which this project aspires is the initiation of a pluralistic Hindu cross-cultural hermeneutics that can contribute to the full development of Hinduism as a world religion. By "the full development of Hinduism as a world religion," I mean, first of all, the development of Hinduism as a religion—not unlike Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam—to which any human being, regardless of nationality or ethnicity, may belong. By *universalism* I mean essentially the aspiration of any religious tradition to be universally relevant, to speak to global concerns rather than restricting itself exclusively to the local concerns of a single national or ethnic group.

Secondly, the full development of Hinduism as a world religion means developing to the fullest degree possible its ethos of *pluralism*, by which I mean a way of envisioning religious diversity that allows for a plurality of approaches to and expressions of truth.

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This vision of Hinduism is a deliberate contrast with restrictive *Hindutvavādī* conceptions of Hinduism that identify being a Hindu with being Indian. In other words, this project is a critique of recent formulations of Hinduism that have been labeled "right wing" or "fundamentalist." To be sure, these labels are not altogether accurate. The term "right wing," for example, is misleading because, apart from its hostility towards other communities, the substantive worldview of Hindutva bears little resemblance to the right wing ideologies of the West.[2] The term "fundamentalist" is even more misleading still, because of its associations with scriptural literalism and soteriological exclusivism, both of which are largely absent from Hinduism. Adherents of Hindutva do not typically claim that the Vedas are the literal word of God and that the Bible and Qur'an are false scriptures, or that all non-Hindus are will suffer eternal damnation after death.

But while such labels are not altogether accurate, and will not be employed in this paper, they do point to an elective affinity between Hindutva ideology and analogous exclusivist movements in such traditions as Christianity and Islam. The ideology of Hindutva runs counter to universalism in the obvious sense that it identifies being Hindu with being Indian, thereby limiting the relevance of Hinduism to the Indian subcontinent. Because it also tends to cultivate and nurture hostility towards non-Hindus, it is also difficult to reconcile with religious pluralism. It is not, strictly speaking, exclusivist in a *theological* sense—as are Christian and Islamic exclusivist theologies—because it does not involve a denial to Christians or Muslims of ultimate religious goals. Again, its claim is not that Christians and Muslims are going to hell. Its exclusivism is of a more socio-political nature, relegating non-Hindus in India to a second-class religio-cultural status.

This project, however, is undertaken from a Neovedāntic *Hindu* perspective. It is a project that seeks to reclaim the term "Hindu" for the universalist and pluralist "wing" of the tradition. All too often, criticisms of Hindutva arise from outside of Hinduism, inadvertently fueling the very ideology that they seek to critique by reinforcing a sense of Hinduism as a tradition under attack. But this project does not suffer from this defect.

This project seeks to advance a *Hindu* alternative to Hindutva, and thereby to advance Hinduism, and indeed, all of humanity, towards a greater pluralism. Religious pluralism could yet be Hinduism's greatest gift to the world, a way not only for Hindus, but also for people of all religions to conceive of their diversity not in terms of competition, but complementarity. It is ultimately in the service of such an ideal that I have written this essay. If every religion in the world could be reduced to a single central concept—Christianity, for example, to the idea that God is love, or Buddhism to impermanence—I think the Hindu ideal would be pluralism. This is not meant to be chauvinistic, to assert that Hinduism is uniquely or wholly pluralistic. But the Hindu *ideal* of pluralism is an ideal from which all humanity could benefit.

I am quite aware that I may potentially be opening a very large can of worms—or, to employ another metaphor, stepping into a nest of extremely ill-tempered hornets—by taking on the subject of Hindutva in the way I am; for I have noted two unfortunate polarizing trends—one in the academy, and the other more predominant

in lay Hindu circles. Both involve demonizing those who dissent from the dominant ideology and who identify themselves in more complex ways, with multiple and overlapping allegiances and commitments.

Specifically, claims to espouse and to promote a Hindu worldview—to be, to put it simplistically, “pro Hindu”—are not infrequently met in the Western academy with the accusation, or at least the suspicion, that one is pro Hindutva. This implies that one is a religious fascist seeking to foment violence against Muslims and Christians in India, or at least a Hindu chauvinist, promoting the superiority of Hinduism over other religions. It is not contemplated that being “pro Hindu” need not mean being anti-non-Hindu, or that it could even *imply*—as it does in my case—a *positive* regard for other traditions, albeit in Hindu terms. At the very least, such a commitment raises questions about one’s scholarly objectivity, despite the fact that Christian theologians, operating out of their Christian convictions, have participated actively in the academy for centuries.

This last point is one with which I am especially concerned. Hindu theology, unlike Christian theology, is not yet a widely accepted category in the modern academy of religion—a state of affairs that this project is intended to help modify.

On the other hand, criticism of Hindutva is similarly met, in at least some Hindu circles, with the accusation that one is anti-Hindu, meaning one is in league with Islamic, Christian, or secular forces antagonistic to Hinduism, or that one has capitulated to such forces. This accusation arises out of a simplistic “with us or against us” mentality.

Given such a polarized situation, I wish to clarify from the outset that I am neither pro-Hindutva nor anti-Hindu. Indeed, I *am* Hindu, and a significant personal agenda that underlies my scholarship is the defense of the legitimacy of this self-identification, both to the modern academy and to the Hindu community.

I am, specifically, a Western Hindu, a convert to the Hindu *dharma*, and the Hinduism that I espouse teaches *ahiṃsā*—nonviolence in thought, word, and deed—as one of its core values. Therefore I certainly have no desire to denigrate Hinduism or to offend Hindus—the religious tradition and the community, respectively, with which I have come to identify and which have had profoundly positive impacts on my life and my spirituality. Indeed, I am in complete sympathy with the fear that underlies the Hindutva ideology. There *are* Islamic, Christian, and secular forces that are avowedly antagonistic to Hinduism. But I am also convinced that violence is not the answer to these forces. On purely pragmatic grounds, an examination of the recent history of religious violence around the world quite clearly demonstrates that such violence leads only to more violence, proving Gandhi’s frequently quoted adage about “an eye for an eye making the whole world blind.” But there are also principled reasons—Hindu reasons—not only for eschewing violence, but for rejecting any ideology that strongly affirms a temporal, material identity in opposition to the deeper unity and interdependence that underlies the existence of all beings. One of my aims here is to articulate these reasons and the principles that underlie them.

With regard to the communal violence that breaks out from time to time between Hindus and other religious communities in India, I find myself in a position quite

similar to that of an Irish Catholic in America who detests the violence that is being committed against her fellow Catholics by Protestants in Northern Ireland, but who equally detests the violence of the IRA committed in the name of a distorted, nationalistic vision of her faith.

My project is therefore critical of Hindutva. But it is a *Hindu* critique, a critique that is based on a sense of the inadequacy of Hindutva to the universalist and pluralist aspirations of the modern Hindu tradition. In this way, it is analogous to the pluralistic theologies that have arisen in the Christian tradition in response to Christian exclusivism, such as the pluralistic philosophical theology of John Hick, the theologies of interfaith dialogue developed by Raimon Panikkar and John Cobb, the pluralistic feminist theology of Rosemary Radford Reuther, and the pluralistic liberation theology of Paul F. Knitter. It is also a project undertaken in close dialogue with these pluralistic theologies, seeking to learn from their mistakes and to perfect their arguments in ways appropriate to the new historical situation of Hinduism—a situation that is increasingly global and multicultural. Hindus benefit, I believe, from the work of the Christian religious pluralists.

For a growing number of Christian theologians over the last two to three decades or so have become highly sensitized to the fact that Christian exclusivism—the doctrine that outside the Christian faith there is no salvation, that all non-Christians are doomed to die and spend eternity in hell—has fueled, and continues to fuel, untold violence against the non-Christian world in the form of crusades, inquisitions, holocausts, and religiously sanctioned imperialism. An awareness is dawning—though still resisted by many—that an exclusivist and triumphalist understanding of Christianity is deeply inadequate to the message of love proclaimed in the teachings of Christ, and attempts have been made to develop pluralistic theologies that conceive of the world's religions as many paths to a common destination, or expressions of different, yet complementary, facets of one truth.

These pluralistic theologies, particularly Hick's Pluralistic Hypothesis, have taken much of their inspiration from modern Hinduism, with its pluralistic self-understanding, as found, for example, in the teachings of Ramakrishna and Gandhi:

> God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by wooden stairs or by bamboo steps or by a rope. You can also climb up a bamboo pole... You may say that there are many errors and superstitions in another religion. I should reply: Suppose there are. Every religion has errors. Everyone thinks that his watch gives the correct time. It is enough to have yearning for God. It is enough to love Him and feel attracted to Him.[3]
>
> Religions are different roads converging upon the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? . . . I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.[4]

The irony of the current situation of Hinduism is that this tradition, which inspired the pluralistic turn in Christian theology, now stands in need of its own pluralistic turn— or rather, a *re*turn, a reassertion and a re-articulation of the pluralistic vision

at its core, or at least at the core of its modern, Neovedāntic incarnation (although it has premodern antecedents).[5] That is my goal here: a new Neovedānta for a new age, a Vedānta for a truly universalist and pluralist Hinduism, a constructive postmodern Vedānta.

Conflicting Ideals: Modern Hindu Universalism and Modern Hindu Nationalism

Hinduism, like all religions today, is undergoing a crisis. Like all world religions, Hinduism is faced with challenges, both external and internal. The external challenges take the form of secular ideologies, like the materialist ideology predominant in the modern scientific community, and the ideologies of other religions, seeking to advance their various claims against those of Hinduism, particularly the aggressive missionary faiths. The internal challenges include such issues as the advancement of the rights of women and Dālits, but also include, prominently, internal divisions over *how* the Hindu community ought to address the external challenges to the Hindu tradition.

The still more fundamental challenge that underlies and informs all of these other challenges, both external and internal, is the challenge of defining what Hinduism is, and, more urgently, what it is going to be in the twenty-first century and beyond.

Two competing visions of Hinduism seem to be recommending themselves in the writings of Hindu thinkers of the modern period. These two visions are not always clearly distinguished from one another in the work of any given author, though some do clearly gravitate in one direction or another.

The first of these visions, which I am advocating, is universalist and pluralist in its outlook. This vision is probably represented most clearly and explicitly in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna on the validity of all religious paths and of Mahatma Gandhi on what he calls the "equality of religions." On this understanding, Hinduism has nothing to fear from other religions or ideologies as such, for all can find a place within its expansive worldview.

To be sure, there have been numerous attacks on this pluralist view that claim that it is actually a veiled triumphalism, intended to assert the superiority of the "tolerant" Hindu tradition over the exclusivist Christian and Muslim traditions, and ultimately, to subsume them; and there are certainly cases in which it has been so used. But it is not at all clear that Hindu pluralism is *necessarily* triumphalist, even if there have been, and continue to be, Hindus who have put it to triumphalist rhetorical uses. It can also simply be a truth claim which many Hindus take to be constitutive of Hinduism; for there have been, and continue to be, Hindus whose pluralistic understanding of Hinduism has been sincere, and not connected with attempts to assert the superiority of Hinduism over other traditions, as evidenced in their dealings with people of other communities. I can cite the example of my own father-in-law, a devotee of Ramakrishna who regularly worships in a church, a mosque, and a gurdwara, as well as a Kālī mandir. He is not, so far as I can

tell, exhibiting Hindu triumphalism. In his own mind, he is exhibiting the truth that God is one and comes in many forms, and that we would all get along better if we thought this.

To the degree that this pluralistic understanding is reflected in Hindu movements such as the Ramakrishna Mission and Transcendental Meditation, one can see that it is also universalist, that it allows for—while not aggressively *promoting*—conversion, that it permits entry into the tradition to all who seek it, regardless of ethnicity or nationality. A Hindu, on this understanding, is one who practices Hinduism, whether Indian or not.

The second competing vision of Hinduism is highly particularist, nationalist, and exclusive. This vision, expressed with its greatest clarity and force in the writings of V.D. Savarkar, conceives of Hinduism as the religion of the people of India. To be Hindu is not only to live a particular way of life and view the world in a particular way. It is also to identify with a particular nation and ethnicity.

What is the history of these two visions of Hinduism? Both visions can claim justification in the texts and practices of the premodern traditions of South Asia that have gradually merged over the centuries and coalesced into the complex entity that is known today as Hinduism. But there are also important respects in which both are distinctively modern. My most basic thesis in this essay is that it is the first vision—the pluralist and universalist vision—that is preferable, both on the basis of its potential to positively transform humanity, and in terms of its fidelity to the premodern tradition. In this essay, I shall focus on the positive transformative potentials of a pluralist and universalist view of the Hindu tradition. The case for the fidelity of this view to the premodern tradition is a more complex one to make, but abundant materials are certainly available in its favor.[6]

For centuries, what is now called Hinduism consisted of many divergent schools of thought, loosely held together by a common commitment to the Brahmanical or Vedic tradition. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Hindu intellectuals began to conceive of Hinduism—one could even argue that they began to "reconstruct" or to "reinvent" it—as the *Sanātana Dharma*—that is, the "eternal" or "universal religion" or "perennial philosophy" believed to underlie all of the world's religions. The commonly held Vedic tradition, and Vedānta philosophy in particular, came to be seen as universal.

A fairly typical illustration of this universalist understanding of Hinduism would be Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's statement in *The Hindu View of Life* that, "The Vedanta is not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance."[7] Vedānta is not, for Radhakrishnan, a merely local reality, a type of Indian philosophy. It is the basis of all human religious experience.

This is what is meant, in part, by the term "Neovedānta"; for this universalization of Hindu categories, though having strong roots in the premodern tradition, is still a *new* development. As articulated by authors like Radhakrishnan, it is decidedly modern; for it is based, as will be discussed shortly, on a thoroughly modern epistemology.

This universalist understanding of Hinduism has been profoundly influential upon the thinking of Western theologians and philosophers of religion. Such Western

thinkers as Aldous Huxley, John Hick, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Paul F. Knitter, and Huston Smith have developed pluralistic and perennialist models for conceptualizing truth and religious diversity based on the Hindu pluralistic principle that *Ekaṃ sadanekāḥ panthāḥ*—"Truth is one, paths are many." The religions of the world, according to this Vedic principle, are many paths to a common goal, or, a still better formulation—the one advocated in this essay—they reflect many complementary facets of a universal truth. Its appropriation by Western scholars, as mentioned in the previous section, reflects a disenchantment with the more limiting, exclusivist models more typical of traditional Christian thought on the topic of truth and religious diversity.

The emergence and the eventual predominance of this conception of Hinduism, at least among Western-educated Hindus, was due largely to the influence of such figures of the "Bengal Renaissance" as Rammohan Roy, Sri Ramakrishna, K.C. Sen, Vivekānanda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and Paramahāṃsa Yogānanda, as well as Mahatma Gandhi, Rāmaṇa Mahārṣi, and Radhakrishnan—all Hindus in conversation, although to varying degrees, with Western thought. Such Western aficionados of Hinduism as the Transcendentalists and Theosophists played a prominent role in this development as well.

Significantly, many of these thinkers—including the Western Theosophists—also played key roles in the development of the idea of the Indian nation-state. Hinduism, conceived as the national religion of the people of India, played a prominent role in the emergence of the concept of India. A tension thus exists in the writings of some of these figures, as well as in the minds of many contemporary Hindus, between their sense of Hinduism as something universal and eternal, while being, at the same time, something distinctively Indian.

On my analysis, this tension is at the heart of the crisis that Hinduism faces today. It was in reaction to this very ambiguity in the meaning of the term "Hindu" that Savarkar, the founding figure of Hindutva ideology, wrote his essay, *Hindutva*, in which he defines a Hindu, unambiguously, as a person who is Indian by ethnicity, by national allegiance, *and* by religious affiliation. In order for one to be a Hindu, all three of these criteria must be met. Consequently, Indians practicing religions of non-Indian origin and practitioners of Hinduism who are not Indian are excluded. At best, non-Indian Hindus, like the Irish Sister Nivedita, are the exception rather than the rule.[8]

Savarkar does, indeed, clarify the situation. The ambiguity of the term "Hindu" rests precisely in the fact that it is sometimes used to denote an ethnicity, sometimes a nationality, and sometimes a religious affiliation. Savarkar's solution, though—to insist that a true Hindu must be all three—dispenses with Hindu universalism: a dear price to pay, I would argue, for clarity. Such universalism is badly needed in a violent world.

The emergence, at least as a widespread understanding, of the more universalist self-conception of Hinduism coincides with a shift within Hinduism from a premodern, tradition-based episteme, an episteme based on the authority of the Vedic scriptures, to a modern episteme, based on a conception of these scriptures as a record of the experiences of the *ṛṣis*, or Vedic sages, who composed

them—experiences available, in principle, to any who are willing to undertake the requisite yogic disciplines.[9]

This is analogous to the historical shift in Western thought from premodernity—in which what counts as knowledge is that which is sanctioned by the authority of either scripture or church tradition—to modernity—in which what counts as knowledge is that which is redeemable in terms of common human experience and reason.

Just as Western modernity has been critiqued by postmodern writers for assuming the universality of rational principles and experiences that are, in fact, local to European culture, and as, in the words of Jürgen Habermas, "an incomplete project" that has failed to deliver fully on its promises of human emancipation, similarly, modern Hinduism fails to live up to its self-conception as a universal dharma inasmuch as it remains bound to the concepts of the Indian nation-state and an Indian ethnic identity—in short, to the idea of *Hindutva*.[10]

The contradiction inherent in the notion of Hinduism as a "universal religion" *and* as the religion of the people of India is, again, a contradiction found both in the writings of major figures of the modern tradition and in the minds of many contemporary Hindus. One sometimes hears the same person refer to the universality and the all-inclusiveness of Hinduism, only to make a statement, moments later, identifying Hinduism exclusively with Indian culture, and even with the Indian nation-state.

Savarkar resolves this contradiction, again, by opting for the more restrictive of the two possible definitions—to be a Hindu is to have a threefold relationship with India: a relationship of blood ties, of national allegiance, and of affiliation to a faith that claims India as its *puṇya bhūmī*, or "holy land." This approach has the advantage of removing the ambiguity of the term "Hindu," but at the cost of Hindu universalism.

I propose that this contradiction be resolved, though—and I would also claim that the weight of the modern and premodern Hindu tradition would have us resolve it—in favor of a universalist, Neovedāntic conception of Hinduism. The impulse of the Hindu tradition toward the articulation of universal truths, particularly in the modern period, is too basic to the tradition to be dispensed with so easily.

One could, of course, ask why this contradiction needs to be resolved at all. Why force the issue? All religions, if one may generalize, possess, to varying degrees, an impulse toward the universal, toward the articulation of general metaphysical truths, in creative tension with a sacralization of particular local realities: a particular sacred land or book or person. As Alfred North Whitehead describes it:

> Religion should connect the rational generality of philosophy with the emotions and purposes springing out of existence in a particular society, in a particular epoch, and conditioned by particular antecedents. Religion is the translation of general ideas into particular thoughts, particular emotions, and particular purposes; it is directed to the end of stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity... Religion is an ultimate craving to infuse into the insistent particularity of emotion that non-temporal generality which primarily belongs to conceptual thought alone.[11]

Religion, on a Whiteheadian understanding, inevitably involves a tension between the universal—the general—and the particular. Religion is much more than a mere

set of propositions. In Hindu terms, a *dharma*, or way of life, is not reducible to a *darśana*, a philosophy or point of view, though it may include or imply one. As Whitehead says, "non-temporal generality... primarily belongs to conceptual thought alone." If promoting a Neovedāntic universalism means to utterly divest Hinduism of its cultural particularity, then this is not a desirable goal at all.

But holding the universal and the particular in tension does not mean dispensing with the universal either. For, as Whitehead also says, religion "is directed to the end of stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity." Particularity is self-defeating to the degree that it renders itself irrelevant to the concerns of the larger world. An exclusively local Hinduism cannot address global issues. It is, in this sense, impotent.

But this is not the only reason to opt for a more universalist understanding of the Hindu tradition as opposed to a more restrictive one. A restrictive definition of Hinduism is also divisive—not unlike the exclusivist theologies of Christianity and Islam, with which it is often lumped as a type of "fundamentalism." It fuels a sense of otherness—an "us and them" mentality—rather than a sense of solidarity among human beings.

As Whitehead asks rhetorically, "Must 'religion' always remain as a synonym for 'hatred'? The great social ideal for religion is that it should be the common basis for the unity of civilization."[12] If the utter denaturalization of Hinduism, its reduction to a mere abstract philosophy, represents one extreme approach to the question of the relation of Hinduism's universalistic impulse to its cultural particularity, Hindutva, I would suggest, represents the opposite extreme. If the one renders Hinduism bereft of emotional appeal, the other invests it with *too much* emotion—emotion of the most destructive variety. It is an ideology, again, of division rather than solidarity.

The problematic nature of Hindutva is highlighted by the experiences of religious minorities within the Indian nation-state—those who do not identify themselves as Hindu, such as Muslims and Christians, and some members of the Dālit community, many of whom have faced violence in the name of Hindutva nationalist exclusivism.

On the other hand, though, the possibility for the emergence of a truly universal Hinduism of the kind envisioned in the Neovedāntic movement—the completion of the incomplete project of modern Hinduism, and its emancipation from such problematically restrictive notions as race and nation—is highlighted by the existence of ever growing numbers of converts to Hinduism (such as myself) who are, by origin, neither culturally nor ethnically Indian, but who are drawn to what we take to be the wisdom and beauty of this tradition and its ability to enrich and give greater depth and meaning to our lives.

The common thread uniting the two distinct concepts operating in a universalist understanding of Hinduism as I see it—that of viewing other religions as complementary to Hinduism (i.e. religious pluralism) and of opening Hinduism to non-Indians—is that both employ Hinduism as a principle of unification, of human solidarity, rather than as a principle of division. A Hindu identity, on such an understanding, is paradoxically, an anti-identity. If identity is normally conceived as operating on a principle of exclusion— "I am this and therefore *not* that"—a Hindu

identity operates on the basis of a principle of *in*clusion—"You and I are part of each other, and of a Reality that transcends us both."

My goal here is not to dwell at length upon the tension between universalist and nationalist conceptions of Hinduism. Is a proper conception of Hinduism a universalist one—that is, is Hinduism *essentially* the universal religion, the *Sanātana Dharma*? Or is Hinduism *essentially* the national religion of the people of India? If the self-critique of the study of India and of Hinduism spearheaded over the last decade or so by Ron Inden, among others, has proven anything, it is that essentialist definitions are figments of the scholarly imagination, and have done far more harm than good both to the study of India, and to Indians themselves.[13] My argument is not for a "true" definition of Hinduism, as though Hinduism was a thing that could be objectively defined. My argument is based, rather, on the desirability (or otherwise) of the *effects* of particular definitions.

My proposal is not that Hinduism is *really* the universal religion and that those who construct it in more local terms are wrong. Nor, again, am I proposing that a wholly denaturalized Hinduism, completely divorced from the cultural context of its emergence, is either possible or desirable. Hinduism will always be bound to Indian culture, just as Christianity remains bound to its Jewish and Greco-Roman roots, Islam to Arabic culture, and Buddhism to Hinduism. But just as these other religious traditions have claimed a more universal relevance that has given them purchase far beyond their cultural points of origin, similarly, Hinduism, I would argue, conceived as the *Sanātana Dharma*, has the potential to embody just such a universal relevance.

My specific proposal is that Hinduism, conceived as a universal religion, has great potential to be a model for imagining a harmony and a unity-in-diversity of the religions and the peoples of the world—a potential that remains untapped to the degree that this tradition continues to be identified with an Indian ethnic and national identity.

Intriguingly, Savarkar also acknowledges this potential at the end of *Hindutva*:

> A Hindu is most intensely so when he ceases to be a Hindu and with a Shankar claims the whole earth for a Benares... or with a Tukaram exclaims... 'My country! Oh brothers, the limits of the Universe—there the frontiers of my country lie!'[14]

Whitehead, Jainism, & Neovedānta: Grounding a Pluralistic Hindu Hermeneutics

The goal of the larger project of which this essay is but a summary is to begin the process of reconceiving modern or Neovedānta, to develop a constructive postmodern Vedānta that can better approximate the aspirations of its adherents that it be universal and pluralistic—as many modern Hindu authors claim it to be. Focusing first on Swāmī Dayānanda Sarāswatī, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, and Gandhi, I will explore, as a possible philosophical basis for a more genuinely universal and

pluralistic Hinduism, an interpretation of Neovedānta in light of aspects of both Whiteheadian process thought and Jain philosophy.

My hope is to outline the compatibility of these systems of thought with more traditional Vedānta, as well as their ability, in combination, to articulate in a logically elegant and compelling way the deeper assumptions underlying the views of the major Neovedāntic thinkers in question on the issue of truth and religious diversity. The goal to which I hope to contribute with this project is the development of a postmodern, process-based Vedāntic philosophy, and of a hermeneutic that will disclose a Hinduism that is a world religion in the fullest sense, as discussed above.

This goal, in turn, is intended to feed into three other goals. By Hinduism "as a world religion in the fullest sense" I mean, again, a religion not restricted to a particular national or ethnic community. I want to argue for a Hinduism that opens up its doors to all people who wish to be affiliated with it. Secondly, should such a concept of Hinduism become popular, it might also help defuse the communal tensions in India. The equation of Hindutva, or "Hinduness," with Indianness problematizes both the Indianness of non-Hindu Indians and the Hinduness of non-Indian Hindus. As a non-Indian Hindu, the second concern has great personal immediacy for me; but the by far more urgent concern, from a humanitarian perspective, is for the non-Hindu minorities of India. An ideology that problematizes the patriotism of fellow citizens on the basis of religion or ethnicity is intrinsically violent, and conducive to acts of actual physical violence and persecution.

Hindutva, in other words, is a kind of Indian McCarthyism, a paranoid "homeland security" mentality directed against Muslims and Christians—or at any who sympathize with them, such as Mahatma Gandhi, assassinated by a partisan of Hindutva ideology.

These two goals—the opening up of Hinduism to non-Indians and making India a safer place for non-Hindus—are desirable effects of this project—again, should such a re-envisioning of Vedānta ever reach the popular consciousness. The third goal, though, to which a process-based Vedāntic philosophy might hopefully contribute is the one that is both the most ambitious and also the one to which it is most directly addressed: namely, the development of a pluralistic hermeneutics that can act as a model for harmony among *all* religions, globally, and not only for Hindus.

One among no doubt many questions that such a project raises is—What is the need for reconceiving Vedānta in the manner described? Why does one need to invoke Whitehead or Jainism in articulating Vedānta? If Vedānta already contains within itself the resources—the potential, to use my earlier term—to act as a model for interreligious harmony, why invoke other traditions?

The short answer to this concern is the following. As I mentioned earlier, the idea of Hinduism as a universal religion, with its accompanying notion that the religions of the world are all paths to a common goal, has been a great inspiration to Western perennialist and pluralist writers who have used this idea to articulate their own models for conceptual harmony among the world's religions. Because of the prominence of Advaita Vedānta in modern Hindu accounts of Hinduism and the resulting misconception among Westerners that Advaita represents the dominant consensus of the Hindu tradition on the nature of the universe and of ultimate reality, these

perennialist and pluralistic models of truth have tended to be conceived in, broadly speaking, Advaitic terms. The prime example here is the Pluralistic Hypothesis of John Hick, according to which all religious experience is ultimately an experience of what he calls "the Real," which is conceived in Kantian terms as the inexperienceable ground or noumenon of all experienced religious phenomena.

On Hick's account, theistic experiences—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or Hindu—of the love of God, Buddhist experiences of Emptiness, and nature-oriented religions' experiences of cosmic harmony are all ultimately experiences of the same inconceivable and indescribable One.

This, of course, is structurally and substantively not unlike an Advaitic conception of theism, according to which the experience of *bhakti*, the experience of Īśvara, like all phenomenal experience, is really an experience of *Nirguṇa Brahman*. Since phenomenal experience as such is deluded, even the experience of *bhakti*, although it has a salvific value inasmuch as it reduces attachment to the ego, is ultimately a derivative experience, an experience of divine reality not as it truly is in itself, but only as it appears to the deluded consciousness. Hick, of course, sees all religious experience, theistic and non-theistic, as being of equal value, inasmuch as he conceives of salvation as transformation from a state of "ego-centeredness" to one of "Reality-centeredness," whereas Śaṅkara's Advaita subordinates the personal to the impersonal, as just described. But Hick's Real is also, ultimately, impersonal—or, to be more precise, beyond distinctions of personal and impersonal, which can be said of Śaṅkara's *Nirguṇa Brahman* as well.

There are problems, however, with Hick's model that become particularly evident when one examines it from the perspective of Whiteheadian process thought. The chief of these inadequacies is its tendency to reduce all three of the major types of religious experience—experience of ultimate reality as a personal deity, as an impersonal universal principle or nature of being as such, and as the natural world itself—to one. This is problematic because it is simply adequate to the complexity of the phenomena for which it seeks to account. Process thinkers representing a variety of religious traditions have been seeking to articulate a model of religious pluralism that does not reduce the various kinds of experience to which the world's religions attest to a common type—suggesting thereby that only one type of religious experience is ultimately authentic, a type of which the others are merely derivative or to which they point beyond themselves.

John Hick's model has proven to be enormously influential in the disciplines of comparative theology and the philosophy of religions. But it has also given ammunition to those who are opposed to the very idea of religious pluralism—religious exclusivists in particular—who have exploited its inadequacies in order to argue that religious pluralism as such is an untenable position.

The goal that Whiteheadian religious pluralists have set for themselves is to articulate, from the positions of their respective religious traditions, a type of religious pluralism acceptable from within those religious traditions, but also reflecting a process interpretation of reality. In a Whiteheadian worldview, all the major forms of religious experience are possible as genuine experiences of the nature of reality without being in any way reduced to one another; for within a Whiteheadian

worldview there is both a personal deity—what process thinkers call "God"—an impersonal universal principle that informs all entities—the principle of creativity—and a universe of actual entities striving for maximal harmony.

As a Whiteheadian Hindu, it is my view that process thought is especially helpful in articulating a Hindu worldview—and especially in articulating the premises underlying Hindu religious pluralism. Similarly helpful is Jain philosophy. I have argued elsewhere that the worldview expressed in process thought is compatible with that presupposed by the Jain doctrines of relativity—*anekāntavāda*, *nayavāda*, and *syādvāda*.[15] According to these three doctrines, respectively, all entities are multi-faceted, due to the character of an entity as a nexus of positive and negative relations to infinite possibilities. All entities, accordingly, can be viewed from infinite perspectives; and the truth or falsity of a claim made of an entity is dependent on the perspective from which it is made. These doctrines provide a hermeneutical tool for the interpretation of seemingly incompatible truth claims as harmonious, and of the world's religions as neither incompatible nor reducible to a common set of truths, but as complementary, and capable of synthesis into a more comprehensive worldview.

I find a Whiteheadian worldview, again, helpful in envisioning what this more comprehensive picture of reality might, in its broad features, be like, as incorporating the elements of theism, acosmic impersonalism, and naturalistic perspectives, as well as, along the lines of Jain thought, harmonizing metaphysical antinomies like permanence and impermanence and unity and diversity.

But what does all of this have to do with Hinduism? Again, the larger question is, "How can Hinduism be reconceived so as to fulfill the potential to which it aspires, at least in the writings of modern, Neo-Hindu or Neovedāntic authors, to universality, as a comprehensive model of universal truth and interreligious harmony?" It seems that if a Hindu approach to truth and religious diversity is necessarily an Advaitic one, along the lines of what Hick has developed, then Hindu affirmations of religious pluralism are doomed to repeat the platitude that truth is one and paths are many without being able to give an adequate, non-reductive account of religious diversity. This also, I would argue, puts Hindu pluralists at a disadvantage in debate with Hindu nationalists over what is to be a mainstream understanding of Hinduism. Hindutva, for all its faults, is coherent and clear. Universalist and pluralist Hinduism must display an even greater coherence if it is to win at least the intellectual debate. The problem, again, is not with Advaita as such, but with the tendency to articulate Hindu religious pluralism solely in Advaitic terms.

But Advaita is not the only, or even the predominant, school of Vedānta, and Vedānta is not the only form of Hindu philosophy, being only one of the six "orthodox" schools, which include Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, as well as Vedānta. And, of course, there are also the "heterodox" schools of Jainism, Buddhism, and Lokāyata or Carvāka materialism, generally not regarded as Hindu due to their not being Vedic, but nevertheless holding a great many Vedic assumptions, and certainly being products of the larger Vedic *dharma* culture of ancient India. There is no reason, therefore, that Hindu religious pluralism needs to be articulated solely in Advaitic terms, or even Vedāntic, terms.

Among the schools of Vedānta, Śaṅkara's Advaita is, of course, the standard-bearer of monistic unity, and Mādhvācārya's dualistic or *Dvaita* Vedānta represents a rigorously pluralistic theism (pluralistic in an ontological, but not a soteriological, sense) affiliated with the Vaiṣṇava theistic tradition. But most schools of Vedānta attempt—some more successfully, in terms of logical and experiential coherence, than others—to reconcile the twin polarities of our experience: unity and diversity.

The most famous of these is probably the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, or "Non-dualism with Difference," of Rāmāṇuja. But there is also the Bhedābheda, or the "Separateness and Non-Separateness" school of Bhartṛprapañca (who lived long before Śaṅkara), Bhāskara, and Yādavaprakāśa; the Dvaitādvaita or "Dualism and Non-Dualism" of Nimbārka and Śrīpati; the Acintya Bhedābheda, or "Inconceivable Separateness and Non-Separateness" of Bāladeva, as well as the Advaita Īśvaravāda, or "monistic theism" of the Śaiva Siddhānta school, described by the twentieth-century master, Satguru Śivāya Subramuniyaswāmī, in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of Whiteheadian thought, as "dipolar panentheism."[16] Clearly, the simplistic identification of Vedānta with Śaṅkara's Advaitic monism that has been such a prominent feature of Western understandings of Hinduism is not adequate to the internal diversity of this tradition. It should also be clear that Vedānta, in its totality, is closer to process thought than one might otherwise guess to be the case; for, like process thought, most forms of Vedānta affirm the reality of both the personal and impersonal, temporal and eternal, relative and absolute, multiple and unitary, ultimate realities.

This is also true of Vedāntic and Vedic thought in the modern period. Dayānanda Saraswatī, the founder of the Ārya Samāj, made the following affirmation, not unlike the Whiteheadian affirmation of a plurality of ultimate realities: "There are three things beginningless: namely, God, Souls, and *Prakriti* or the material cause of the universe. These are also ever-existing. As they are eternal, their attributes, works and nature are also eternal."[17]

A Whiteheadian would, of course, reject the hard-core *ontological* dualism that this quotation suggests between the soul and matter, seeing soul and *prakṛtī* as different arrangements of the same fundamental type of experiencing actual entity—a "soul" being a personally ordered series of such entities and *prakṛtī* being an aggregate of such entities experienced as an object. Process thought, in a basic ontological sense, is monistic, but dualistic with respect to the kinds of structures which actual entities can constitute. But Dayānanda Saraswatī's basic ontological pluralism, and his rejection, in no uncertain terms, of the Advaitic monism of many of his Neovedāntic contemporaries, definitely places him closer to Whitehead than to Śaṅkara: "The *Neo-Vedantists* look upon God as the *efficient* as well as the *material* cause of the universe, but they are absolutely in the wrong."[18] Dayānanda Sarāswatī affirms the basic theistic God-World distinction.

Ramakrishna, too, affirmed a distinction between the personal deity—his favored form of divinity, or *iṣṭadevatā*, being Kālī, the Divine Mother—and the impersonal Absolute. Throughout the course of his many famous *sādhanas*, or spiritual practices, Ramakrishna is said to have experienced forms of *both* acosmic realization *and* loving union with divinity—sometimes simultaneously. Furthermore, and in direct contrast with the Advaitic tradition with which his teachings later came to

be identified, he is also said to have recommended *both* as valid salvific and liberating experiences, reducing neither to the other, nor seeing one as derivative from the other. In fact, even Ramakrishna's student, Swāmī Vivekānanda, who is widely perceived as being largely responsible for the primarily Advaitic form in which Ramakrishna's teachings have been cast, says in several contexts that the personal and the impersonal are simply *different* ways of perceiving the same reality.

For his own part, Ramakrishna preferred to remain in the literally indescribable state of *bhāvamukha*, in which he is said to have been aware *simultaneously* of *both* the one eternal substance at the foundation of existence—Śaṅkara's *nirguṇa Brahman—and* the ongoing personal presence of divinity, thus affirming the essential reality of both.

Another Bengali sage of the modern period, Sri Aurobindo, is also known to have experienced all three basic kinds of ultimate religious object. He also developed a system of "Integral Yoga" with considerable affinities to process thought, intended to incorporate all three, without privileging one over the rest. "In contrast with Śaṅkara's version of Vedānta, which relegated Īśvara 'to subordinate or inferior phases of the Brahman-idea,' Aurobindo affirmed the position of the *Gītā,* which 'represent[s] the Ishwara . . . as higher even than the still and immutable Brahman . . . as containing within himself the opposition of the Brahman with qualities and without qualities . . . Aurobindo did not deny the experience of *Nirguṇa Brahman*. Indeed, his first mystical experience was of 'the spaceless and timeless Brahman.' Rather, Aurobindo denied only that this was the sole or the highest experience. Put otherwise, Aurobindo spoke of Brahman, the impersonal supercosmic existence, and Īśvara, the personal cosmic spirit, as co-equal and co-eternal, rejecting all ideas of any hierarchical ordering between them."[19]

Finally, Mahatma Gandhi similarly affirmed the validity of both theistic and nontheistic religious experiences and ends—despite the monistic implications of many of his pronouncements on religious pluralism. Indeed, what is especially interesting about Gandhi is the fact that he draws explicitly upon the Jain doctrines mentioned earlier in the formulation of his view. Again, as I have argued elsewhere, these doctrines imply a relational ontology that is essentially identical to that affirmed by Whitehead. Gandhi's willingness to draw upon these ideas is thus suggestive of a *logical* compatibility between his religious pluralism and process thought.

While Gandhi did embrace, in many of his writings, Advaita philosophy, he also spoke and wrote frequently of a personal God—distinct from humanity and from the rest of the universe—and of the importance of discerning and behaving in accordance with God's will, and of the actions of God as an agent in human history—theistic concepts more in line with Vaiṣṇava Dvaita philosophy, or Abrahamic monotheism, than with the ultimately impersonal and formless Brahman of Advaita Vedānta.

In early 1926 or late 1925, this apparent inconsistency in his thought was pointed out by a reader of Gandhi's English-language newspaper, *Young India*, in a letter to the editor. Gandhi's response to this letter, in the January 21, 1926 issue, is highly revealing and useful; for in it he uses the Jain *syādvāda* doctrine to reconcile his commitment to the reality of both the personal and the impersonal aspects of

Brahman: "I am an *advaitist* and yet I can support *Dvaitism* (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *Anekantavadi* or a *Syadvadi*."[20]

Much more can, of course, be said on this topic; but this preliminary survey of the tradition should suggest that Hindu religious pluralism is eminently compatible with a Whiteheadian worldview, despite the tendency to cast such pluralism in Advaitic terms, as involving a common divine object to which all religious experience is reducible. Indeed, Hinduism is far more "Whiteheadian" than is generally recognized.

This means, therefore, that a Whiteheadian Hinduism is possible, which implies, in turn, that a Hindu religious pluralism is conceivable which is capable of addressing the objections that have been raised against existing forms of this position that have taken their basis on a more exclusively Advaitic understanding of reality. The Hindu tradition contains the conceptual tools for articulating a pluralistic model of truth and religious diversity that balances these two—truth and diversity—without reducing the many to the one, or the personal to the impersonal, or the relative to the absolute. These conceptual tools, moreover, are amenable to being articulated in Whiteheadian terms. Hindu and process thought are inter-translatable.

But what would a Whiteheadian Hinduism look like? How, specifically, are the terms of Whiteheadian process thought and Hinduism inter-translatable? It is to these questions that the remainder of this essay is dedicated.

A Hindu Process Theology

Translation, even between languages, is never simply a matter of making one-to-one correspondences between terms; for perfect correspondence never exists. Translation always involves a reconstruction and creative transformation of the original term in the idiom of the new language. A Whiteheadian, or *process*, Hindu theology is therefore not just a re-statement of Vedānta using the terminology of process thought. It is something new—an addition to the diversity of the already diverse Hindu tradition, a new Vedānta for a new age. It is also, simultaneously, a new *process* hermeneutics, a new application of process thought to a new context, and ultimately, a new kind of process thought.

The consciousness of a Hindu process theologian is the locus of the convergence of two cultures, systems of thought, and methods of metaphysical inquiry, and a Hindu process theology a hybrid of these. A Hindu process theology is a conceptual statement and a reflection of the new global Hinduism seeking to have relevance beyond the local concerns of the Indian subcontinent. It does not supersede or try to replace these local concerns, or the more ancient formulations that have traditionally reflected them. In fact, it draws upon these more traditional formulations as resources and guides for its own new reflections. But it also tries to go beyond the existing tradition and speak to the new transnational and multicultural situation of the Hindu tradition and community.

Which Vedāntic concepts does a Hindu process theology seek to translate and to understand using the terminology of process thought? A close examination of Vedānta reveals several concepts with which a Hindu process theology needs to be concerned: *Brahman*, in both its Nirguṇa and Saguṇa aspects, *Īśvara*, or God, and the relationship of God to the myriad entities that constitute the universe, *Māyā*—meaning illusion, but also creativity, and corresponding in the Tāntric Śaiva and the Śākta traditions to *Śakti*, or creative power—*Karma*, *Saṃsāra*, the cycle of rebirth—and *Mokṣa*—liberation from this cycle.

Similarly, process thought has certain fundamental concepts that a process thinker of any religious tradition will inevitably need to deploy, and that will need to be brought into harmony with the concepts of the religious tradition in question. In fact, one could even say that it is the deployment of these concepts that defines a process thinker as such, that the proper deployment of these concepts, as developed in the writings of seminal process philosophers such as Whitehead and Hartshorne, constitute the rules of the game of process thought. To again use the metaphor of translation, fidelity to the meanings of the terms of both systems—in my case, Vedānta and process thought—as understood by native speakers, is a prerequisite to a successful correlation of concepts. And yet, as with translation, the meanings of the terms of both systems will inevitably be transformed and stretched beyond their normal native usage in the attempt to correlate them.

The fundamental concepts of process thought, as outlined by Whitehead in the foundational text of the process tradition, *Process and Reality*, are creativity, the many, and the one. Another central, but derivative, notion in process thought (and surprisingly so for those accustomed to more conventional forms of theism), is the concept of God, and of God's two natures: the *primordial* and the *consequent*.

Creativity "is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact."[21] It is the absolute of Whitehead's system, the unchanging ultimate reality that underlies all things, connecting the many and the one. "It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity."[22] The unity to which Whitehead refers, "the one" of which he speaks, is not the totality of all existence, but the unity of a particular actual entity—another central process concept. The universe is made up of innumerable actual entities, each of which is a unification, in a unique moment of experience, of the relations of that entity to the rest of the entities that make up the universe—"the many," or "the universe disjunctively." In the Whiteheadian worldview, every entity participates in every other, through relations.

The role of God in process thought is to act as that entity through which the abstract principle of creativity becomes actual for the actual entities that make up the universe. According to Whitehead, an actual entity can only be related to another actual entity. How, then, does the principle of creativity, which is not itself an entity, become available to actual entities in order to make possible their interrelation and mutual participation? Why, to put the question in more conventional terms, is the universe not simply a chaos of unrelated, uncoordinated entities? What holds this universe together, making it a *uni*verse, a coherent unity? This is the role of what Whitehead calls "God."

God, in a Whiteheadian worldview, is not the creator of the universe—at least not in the conventional sense of a creator *ex nihilo* that one finds in classical Christian theism. God, rather, is the *coordinator* of the universe. God envisions all possibilities—called by Whitehead "eternal objects"—and organizes them through a "conceptual valuation," bringing order to what would otherwise be a chaos of potentials. God's "unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects" is called, by Whitehead, the "primordial nature" of God.[23] Through the relations that the entities have to God, the possibilities that God has envisioned become available to them for actualization. This is the sense in which God "creates" the universe in process thought: by making possibilities available to entities for actualization in an ordered fashion that makes a universe possible. But the entities are free to determine how they will actualize the possibilities available to them. God, though supremely powerful, is not omnipotent in process thought. If God can be said to exert creative power over the entities through the conceptual valuation of possibilities, the entities, too exert creative power over God. Through their choices, they collectively foreclose certain possibilities, and open up others. God's choice of actions in attaining the divine end of maximal harmony is therefore also affected by the actual entities that make up the universe. God both acts and is acted upon. This is what process thinkers mean when they say that God is *relative*. God as acted upon, as affected by the universe, is called, by Whitehead, the "consequent nature of God."[24]

So how, precisely, do the categories of Vedānta and of process thought translate into one another? My preliminary explorations of both systems of thought suggest the following set of correlations: Brahman is an overarching unity that encompasses all of the categories of process thought, and for which process thought has no precise equivalent. Nirguṇa Brahman corresponds to creativity inasmuch as it is abstract and non-actual—the absolute—while Māyā corresponds to creativity as actualized in the activities of God and the entities that make up the universe. Saguṇa Brahman corresponds to the complex that consists of both God and the universe together. Karma represents the collective influence of the past—the many—upon the emergent actual entity—the one. Saṃsāra stands for the journey of a personally ordered society of actual entities—a soul—through time, and Mokṣa, or liberation, represents a radical transformation of the way a soul experiences its temporal journey. In the remaining sections, I shall unpack the thought process that has led me to these preliminary conclusions.

"Sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ Brahman"

What exactly is *reality*? What is the ultimate character of existence? *Brahman*, the foundational concept of Vedānta, is the most commonly found Hindu answer to these two questions. Reality is Brahman.

In most Hindu systems of thought, at least the majority of the Vedānta schools, the whole of reality, encompassing all actuality and possibility, is designated by the term *Brahman*. Brahman—"the Real" (*sat*)—is coextensive with reality as such. It

is that which is real pre-eminently, and of which the existence of all other entities is derivative and in which it participates. It is that, by knowing which, all things are known.[25] It is also the ultimate object of religious aspiration, of the ancient Upanishadic prayer, "Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality."[26] It is eternal. "It is immortal; it is Brahman; it is the Whole."[27] So central is this concept that it is probably not an exaggeration to say that to understand Hindu metaphysics is to come to grips with the idea of Brahman, the ultimate unity underlying all of existence.

How else is Brahman characterized? *Brahman* is a Sanskrit term that can be translated as "the expansive" or "that which makes things great." It is described in the Upanishads as the sweet essence of all that is, the "honey of all beings."[28] It is Brahman that has become all things. It is that in which they live, move, and have their being. It is from Brahman that all have emerged and to which all shall inevitably return. And it is Brahman that all things *are*, in their essence, throughout the course of their existence. This is possibly *the* central Vedāntic doctrine: Brahman is our very self. *Tat tvam asi*, according to one of the most celebrated of the great formulations, or *mahāvākyas*, of the *Chandogya Upanishad*. "You are That." There is nothing that is not Brahman. As the Upanishads also say, *Sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ Brahman*. "All this is indeed Brahman." Of all the Vedāntic traditions, the one that gives by far the most emphasis to the unity of all things in Brahman is the Advaita tradition; but Brahman is a central concept in all of the Vedāntic systems (including Dvaita, where it is identified with God, Vishnu).

Brahman as the One Infinite Being, Consciousness, and Bliss

Brahman is a universal, all-pervading substance that has become all things. An image used in contemporary Vedānta to explain this is of Brahman as a vibrating energy field. The vibrations of Brahman correspond to the whole range of existing entities— from solid to liquid to gas to energy to consciousness—conceived as quantum realities vibrating at different frequencies, modifications of the same basic "stuff" of reality. In premodern Hindu texts, these modifications of Brahman are referred to, respectively, as earth, water, air, fire, and *ākāśa* (translated variously as "space" or "ether," the medium of sound, but conceived in the contemporary tradition as the medium of consciousness).

The essential characteristics of Brahman, according to Vedānta, include, first and foremost, unity. Brahman is "one alone, without a second,"[29] and is consistently referred to in the singular as "that" (*tat*) or "that one" (*tadekam*). But Brahman–or *ātman*, Self, with which it is ultimately identical–is also described quite frequently as infinite being, consciousness, and bliss (*anantaram sat-chit-ānandam*).[30]

This set of characteristics raises several complex philosophical questions. If Brahman is the totality of all that exists—if there is nothing that is *not* Brahman—then how can consciousness and bliss characterize Brahman? Can Brahman be the same as its qualities, if there is nothing that is not Brahman? Moreover, regarding

the characteristics themselves, consciousness and bliss, as generally understood, are types of *experience*. As types of experience, they must necessarily involve a subject and an object–that is, an experiencer and that which is experienced. Consciousness, or awareness, thus involves a knower and a thing that is known, and bliss an enjoyer and a thing that is enjoyed.

But Brahman is "one alone, without a second." What is there outside Brahman for Brahman to know or enjoy? If Brahman is all that exists then the answer must be "Nothing." But then how can Brahman be characterized by consciousness and bliss?

Because there is nothing else for Brahman to know or enjoy, the inescapable conclusion is that Brahman must know and enjoy itself. This is the Hindu answer to the question of creation: Why does the universe exist? This is not the same as Heidegger's metaphysical question, "Why is there anything at all?" The answer to this question is that it is in the very character of reality to exist; for existence, as well as consciousness and bliss, is one of the essential characteristics of Brahman. The real cannot not be.

But why *this* universe? Why a universe of infinite variety, of manifold entities, of human beings and plants and animals, of stars and planets and galaxies, of atoms and quarks? The very nature of Brahman is being, consciousness, and bliss. For Brahman, therefore, to be fully what it is—for it to *be* being, consciousness, and bliss—it must become many. That One, by its very nature, by its own internal necessity, must manifest as a plurality—indeed an infinity—of conscious, enjoying, existing beings—or, to use the terminology of process thought, *actual entities*. The One *is* the many. And, of course, as we have already seen, in the process worldview, the many also become the one—though by "the one," Whitehead means not the totality of all existence, but each unitary actual entity, which includes all the others within itself through its relations with them.

Nirguṇa Brahman: Formless Creativity/Saguṇa Brahman: Informed Theocosm

Seeing Brahman from an eternal perspective, the perspective of its own nature, it is a unitary state of infinite being, consciousness, and bliss. But the very nature of these essential characteristics necessitates the manifestation of Brahman in—or rather, *as*—the space-time continuum and the multitude of varied beings therein. From the perspective of time and space, then—from our finite temporal perspective, that is—Brahman can be seen as a kind of inner necessity or dynamism in all things which sustains them in their existence and gives them a trajectory in the direction of the realization of infinite bliss and infinite consciousness. The Hindu tradition calls this internal dynamism within all things *Māyā*. Māyā is Brahman as perceived from the perspective of time and space, as well as that in Brahman which necessitates its manifestation *as* time and space.

This inner dynamism and trajectory towards the intensification of experience that characterizes all things, a trajectory involving the evolution of increasingly complex

types of experience (like consciousness) and a drive towards beauty (the experience of which one could call "bliss") is called, in process thought, the principle of *creativity*. This is also another meaning of the Hindu term *Māyā*. The principle of creativity is the principle that, according to process thought, underlies all existence, potential and actual. In this function, therefore, as a metaphysical absolute, it would seem to correspond not only to Māyā, but also to Brahman itself. The first contribution of a Hindu process hermeneutics to the Hindu tradition is the insight that Brahman *is* creativity, an insight already implicit in Advaita Vedānta and Tāntric thought, but made explicit here.

Creativity, however, in process thought, is not, as Brahman is, at least in Advaita Vedānta, the sum total of all existence. Creativity is an abstract, eternal principle that *informs* all things. It is the fundamental principle of existence that underlies all forms; but it is, itself, formless. It is not conceived, in process thought, as an actual entity. In contrast with the entities that make up the universe of time and space, creativity, "can be called the *formless ultimate*," the "ultimate behind all forms."[31]

A process theologian, then, would not say that creativity *is*, like Brahman, all things. Brahman *is* creativity, but is not exhausted by it. A process Hindu theologian, it seems, would need to say that the sum total of reality—Brahman—contains within itself a formless aspect, corresponding to the process concept of creativity in the abstract, but that Brahman also possesses an aspect *with* form, corresponding to the universe of actual entities, Brahman's manifestation as the space-time continuum and the entities therein. But is such a postulation of a dual nature of Brahman warranted in the Hindu tradition?

In fact, Brahman, according to most forms of Vedānta, *does* have a dual nature. It possesses a *Nirguṇa* aspect and a *Saguṇa* aspect, corresponding to the aspects of reality in question. *Nirguṇa* literally means "without qualities"—Brahman as unqualified and unconditioned by any form or limitation. *Saguṇa*, in contrast, means "with qualities"—Brahman qualified by the limitations of time and space, the sum total of all actual entities.

Nirguṇa Brahman corresponds to Whitehead's understanding of creativity as non-actual and formless. Saguṇa Brahman corresponds to the two realities which Whitehead calls "the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast"—namely, God and the World, or, to return to my earlier language, God and the universe.[32]

Because God and the world are conceived, in Vedānta and in process thought, as realities that necessitate one another, realities which, in Whitehead's terms, "stand to each other in mutual requirement," I suggest, as a term for referring to the joint entity that they together constitute, the word *theocosm*—the God-World complex; for no such term currently exists in Western thought (at least not to my knowledge). This Western, Greek term would correspond to the Vedāntic concept of Saguṇa Brahman, and allow for easier translation between Vedānta and Western philosophy. But apart from being dependent, in some respect, upon the world, what precisely is God in process thought? This was briefly summarized earlier, and shall now be discussed in greater detail.

Īśvara as Paramātman: God, the Soul of All Beings

The central doctrine of process thought is its doctrine of God. God is also central to most forms of Hinduism. But God, or Īśvara, and Brahman, at least according to most schools of Vedānta (the main exception being Dvaita, as noted earlier), are not identical. Like creativity, God is a subset of Brahman, which is the sum total of reality, the Whole. Brahman is generally conceived as ultimately impersonal—or, more accurately, beyond or encompassing both personal and impersonal qualities. Brahman is Being Itself. Īśvara, on the other hand, although the Supreme Being, is nevertheless *a* being, an inhabitant of the spatio-temporal realm—albeit the most important one, and the only metaphysically *necessary* one, without whom no possible world could exist. God, or Īśvara, is therefore dependent, ultimately, upon Brahman. God is a derivative reality from Brahman. This metaphysically derivative character is seen as being in no way in conflict with the absolutely central role which God plays in Hindu piety (though a Dvaitin would disagree).

The same is true of God in process thought. God is the pre-eminent exemplar of the principle of creativity, the one who makes creativity available to the other beings that make up the universe, mediating between the realms of form and formlessness. It is through God that unmanifest creativity—which we have identified here with Nirguṇa Brahman—becomes manifest creativity, or Māyā.

But God did not create creativity. God, in both Hinduism and process thought, is not a creator *ex nihilo*, as mentioned earlier. The inner logic of creativity, rather, has necessitates God. This is why Whitehead, in terms strikingly reminiscent of an Advaitic understanding of divinity, calls God a "derivative notion."[33] This apparent reduction, from the perspective of classical Christian theology, of the role of God—that is, a conception that makes God subject to, and indeed dependent upon, a logical necessity beyond the control of the divine will—is one of the primary reasons Christian theologians have given for rejecting process theology as incompatible with the Christian tradition. Even modern Christian theologians usually make God ultimate in all respects.[34]

But this same formulation places process thought squarely in the mainstream of Hindu thought, and gives Hindu thinkers all the more reason to be comfortable with process theology and with a process hermeneutics as a vehicle for the expression of an authentic Hindu self-understanding. Process thought is already very "Hindu."

But why is God necessary to process thought or to Vedānta? As Whitehead explains, the universe, as a closed system, a self-contained whole, without a creator or an imposition of order from outside—a conception of the universe that Whitehead calls "the doctrine of Immanence"–necessitates some *internal* principle of order that guarantees the universe will not slide into chaos and that creates the conditions for the very possibility of a universe:

> In fact, the Universe, as understood in accordance with the doctrine of Immanence, should exhibit itself as including a stable actuality whose mutual implication with the remainder of things secures an inevitable trend towards order.[35]

This "stable actuality" is what is meant by *God* in process theology.

It is important to point out that God, in both process thought and in Hinduism, is a being that is *internal* to all things, and is yet, at the same time, distinct from them.[36] Both systems could be called *panentheistic*. Panentheism is, of course, the belief, not that God *is* all beings (which is called pantheism), but that God is *in* all beings, and all beings, at the same time, are in God. All beings are Brahman, but all beings are not God. God is *in* all beings, at their deepest core, as their deepest, most authentic self, or *ātman*.

This view is expressed by Hindu thinkers like Swāmī Muktānanda, known for his expression, "God dwells in you as you." Swami Vivekānanda refers to God as "the soul of our souls,"[37] and another Vedāntic term for God is *paramātman*, or the Supreme Self, the Self or soul of all beings. The same panentheistic understanding is expressed in the *Bhagavad Gītā* when Bhagavān Sri Krishna says, "He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, to him I am not lost, nor is he lost to Me."[38] It is from the *Gītā* that the often heard Hindu injunction is derived to "see God in all beings."

Though Hindus will often use language that sounds more literally pantheistic than panentheistic, this observation should be balanced by the equally valid observation that the distinction between deity and worshipper is absolutely vital to popular Hindu practice, like the performance of *pūjā*, or devotional worship addressed to a personal manifestation of God in a particular form, or *mūrti*—a practice decried for centuries by Muslims and Christians as idolatry. The God-World distinction is especially central to Vaiṣṇava traditions. It might be accurate to say that Hinduism as a whole, if one may generalize, sees God and the World as neither wholly distinct nor wholly identical, but as existing in symbiotic continuity. My invented term *theocosm* again comes to mind.

The concept of the relationship between the individual self and God in Hinduism, dating back at least to the *Upanishads*, is neither one of simplistic identification, nor of absolute separation. Living beings are depicted in such texts as the *Taittirīya Upanishad* as being made up of multiple layers or levels—the *kośas*—with the outermost, physical layer being the most changeable, the most superficial, and the inner layers being, as one progresses inward, successively more and more permanent, more and more real.[39] Even deeper than the physical self, for example, is the personality we have developed over the course of our experiences in this life—our habits, memories, predispositions, etc., known as our *saṃskāras*. But even deeper than this personality would be the traces of the personalities and memories that we carry in our subconscious minds—in our souls—from our previous lives. Going beyond even this level—and others, still more profound—God exists within and experiences through us from our fundamental core or center. A well-known metaphor for this divine indwelling is given in the *Bhagavad Gītā*: the metaphor of a string of pearls, with God dwelling within and connecting all beings just as the string connects the pearls that rest upon it. "On me all that is here is strung like pearls upon a thread."[40] This image of God dwelling within all beings is perfectly compatible with a process understanding of God influencing actual entities from within by providing them with their subjective aim at the initial phase of their concrescence.

Infinite Beings Seeking Infinite Consciousness and Bliss

Turning now, though, from the vast, cosmic scale of God and Being to the more modest scale of human existence, what is the meaning and purpose of life in the universe as conceived by a Hindu process theology? To summarize briefly what we have seen thus far, the sum total of all reality is conceived in Hinduism as Brahman. Creativity as unmanifest corresponds to the concept of Nirguṇa, or formless, Brahman. But manifest creativity, the manifestation of creativity as the propelling force underlying all things, corresponds to the concept of Māyā, or Śakti in the Śaiva and Śākta traditions. Finally, the totality of actual entities, including God, or Īśvara—the theocosm—corresponds to Saguṇa Brahman. In both Hindu and process thought, as we have seen, God is postulated as a necessary element of Saguṇa Brahman, a kind of bridge between the Nirguṇa and the Saguṇa realms of form and formlessness, respectively. God makes available to all beings the creative potentials which they have the ability to embody.

According to process thought, as mentioned earlier, an actual entity can only be related to another actual entity. In order for a universe to exist for more than a mere instant—and that by sheer chance—in order for it to have stability and continuity, an actual entity is necessary that is able to embody and present to the rest of the actual entities making up the universe the sum total of future possibilities that they are capable of actualizing. This necessary being is a necessary condition for the existence of any possible future. This necessary being is God. God's envisionment of possibilities at any given moment is called, in process thought, God's *primordial nature*.

But what is our role—we, the actual beings who make up the universe? Our role is to make Brahman, in actuality, what it is capable of becoming as a pure potentiality. Our role is to manifest the unmanifest: infinite being, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss. In process terminology, our role is to evolve forms of experience capable of the potentially limitless enjoyment of potentially limitless beauty. God, in turn, by means of the divine relativity, or *consequent nature*, experiences all of this *through us*.

God's role in this cosmic process is to act as a center of universal consciousness, to coordinate the experiences of the many beings making up the universe such that they constitute a unity—a universe—to bring unity and order from the chaos of the multitude of individual decisions made by the actual entities at each new moment of the creative advance in response to the possibilities disclosed to them through the divine primordial nature. God already embodies infinite being, consciousness, and bliss, and by so doing lures us to do the same, and is the surest route, at any given moment, to our achievement of it. This is what Whitehead calls the "divine persuasion," and our harmonization with it would correspond to the Hindu concept of *bhakti*.[41] *Bhakti*, often translated simply as "devotion," is actually a mutual participation of being between God and the individual.

The situation from which we begin, however, as human beings, makes our role in the actualization, the ongoing creation and self-expression, of the universe far from self-evident. We do not always *feel* that the fundamental basis of our existence is a potential for infinite being, consciousness, and bliss. We do not always *feel*

bhakti. We do not always *feel* like beings in whom God perpetually dwells, and whom God is perpetually calling, from the depths of our pre-conscious experience, to higher and higher levels of awareness and enjoyment. We feel, to use a term from the philosopher Heidegger (whose philosophy has many affinities with process thought), "thrown" into this world, with little or no sense of our purpose or of our connectedness, through God, with all other beings, save what our culture and our society give to us. We arrive into this world in a state of *avidyā*, or ignorance of our true nature and potential. This primal ignorance characterizes the existential condition of most ordinary human beings.

From this ignorance arises suffering—the fear of death, of losing oneself, which gives rise to the fear of losing one's loved ones, and one's property, whatever one sees as an extension of oneself, and so to fear, and eventually hatred, of the Other, whom one views as a threat—a fear and hatred fueled by ideologies like Hindutva. This is possible because we are unaware that God dwells within all beings, including ourselves.

But what is the cause of this ignorance? What is Hindu process theology's response to the problem of evil?

The fact of primordial spiritual ignorance, of *avidyā*, is a necessary side effect of the process by which Brahman is actualized, by which creative potential is transformed, through us and through God, through the beings making up the universe, into a spatio-temporal field of experience. Recall the earlier discussion of the problem raised by the nature of Brahman as both one and as infinite being, consciousness, and bliss. In order for the One to become fully—actually—what it already is in it eternity—in potential—in order for it to manifest its nature in time, it is necessary for the One to become the many, to take on the limitation of being a finite subject experiencing the finite objects of the spatio-temporal world.[42] Put another way, there can be no consciousness or bliss—much less infinite consciousness and bliss—without the experience of finitude. The purpose of our existence is to move from our current state of *avidyā*, ignorance, to *vidyā*, or wisdom, from the finite to the infinite—or, to again invoke the ancient prayer of the Vedic sages, from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.

The fact that the nature of the creative process necessitates the state of "original ignorance" in which we find ourselves is expressed through the ambiguity of the term *Māyā*. Māyā, as we have already seen, is translatable as "creative power." But it is also translatable as "illusion." Māyā is the creativity that makes all of our strivings possible, but it is also, paradoxically, that which we are striving to overcome. The basic concept of Māyā is that the creative process by which God—Īśvara—coordinates the experiences of the entities constituting the world and guides them to the realization of their potential—the realization of Brahman—is also the process by which ignorance and darkness arise; for this process necessarily veils from us the true nature of reality. It is precisely by overcoming and learning to see through and beyond this veil that our true potential can be realized, our realization of the ultimate aim of all creativity, the actualization of infinite being, consciousness, and bliss.

A metaphor may be useful for grasping this concept. Imagine Brahman is an invisible man. It is only be wearing a mask and clothes that he can be seen. The

mask and the clothes are not the man. They hide his true nature. But without them, he would remain invisible. The mask and clothes of Brahman are *Māyā*.

The invisibility of the man—Brahman's non-actuality, its Nirguṇa nature, its formless form—is what necessitates the clothes—or Māyā—that make his shape manifest. The clothes, however, do not *create* the man's form. This invisible form is ontologically prior to the clothes that make it manifest. But in our experience, both are mutually dependent. As far as our eyes are concerned, there would be no form of the man if the clothes were not there to make it evident to us. In the same way, we can only reach Brahman through Māyā—a conclusion which places a process interpretation of Hinduism quite close to the Tāntric tradition, as does its emphasis on the immanence and the non-omnipotence of divinity.

Māyā, as creative power, has a purpose—the coordination of the experiences of the entities making up the world such that they can eventually realize their true nature and experience the infinite consciousness and bliss that is their ultimate destiny. This, of course, is the function of God, and it is through Māyā that God performs this function. Māyā is God's creative power—a common theme found throughout the Hindu scriptures, across a wide array of sectarian boundaries. Through Māyā, God manifests a world of regularities–universal laws or *dharmas*–like the laws of physics, or the laws of morality.

The fundamental principle of regularity on which Māyā operates is the principle of action, or *Karma*. Karma can be understood as the sum total of the effects of all of the previous actions undertaken by the entities constituting the universe—including our own past selves, both immediate and distant—and the future effects that we are currently creating with our present choices, our present actions. Karma, one could say, is an extension of creativity—the creativity in which we, ourselves, with our decisions, have a share.

The idea that one sometimes finds in the Hindu tradition that karma is an inexorable law, which even God must respect, fits well with the process doctrine of the non-omnipotence of God—that God coordinates and persuades, but that the power of decision of the actual entities is inviolable.

But the retributive nature of karma is also compatible with God's coordinative activity operating in such a way as to aid us maximally in our efforts toward self-realization, with the idea of life as a classroom, in which we learn from our experiences, which guide us, gradually, toward our goal. By engaging in activity, by making choices, by exercising our freedom, we gradually learn, through trial and error, the deep truths of existence. God's coordinating action and our free will cooperate to produce the optimal result. A similar concept is found in the Śaiva *Āgama* literature, in its doctrine of divine grace, or *karuṇā*, as summarized by S.N. Dasgupta:

> Ordinarily the idea of grace or *karuṇā* would simply imply the extension of kindness or favour to one in distress. But in the *Śaivagamas* there is a distinct line of thought where *karuṇā* or grace is interpreted as a divine creative movement for supplying all souls with fields of experience in which they may enjoy pleasures and suffer painful experiences. The *karuṇā* of God reveals the world to us in just the manner as we ought to experience it. Grace, therefore, is not a work of favour in a general sense, but it is a movement in favour of our

> getting the right desires in accordance with our *karma*. Creative action of the world takes place in consonance with our good and bad deeds, in accordance with which the various types of experience unfold themselves to us. In this sense, grace may be compared to the Yoga philosophy, which admits a permanent will of God operating in the orderliness of the evolutionary creation . . . for the protection of the world, and supplying it as the basis of human experience in accordance with their individual *karmas*.[43]

According to Hindu thought, the process of spiritual evolution can take an entity many lifetimes—and the compatibility of this doctrine of rebirth, or *punarjanma*, with process thought is something that David Ray Griffin, among others, has affirmed.[44] In process thought, the soul is a serially or "personally" ordered society, or sequence, of actual entities that inherit experiences from one another in succession, and is capable of non-corporeal existence. The process of rebirth—literally "wandering about"—through which the soul gradually realizes its true nature and purpose is called *Saṃsāra*.

Mokṣa: Liberation

The ultimate goal of most Hindu religious practice, and certainly of Vedānta, is *Mokṣa*, or liberation from Saṃsāra, from the process of wandering from rebirth to rebirth in search of one's true self.

This, of course, naturally raises the question frequently asked by my students, namely, "What happens next?" What is the fate of an entity who has escaped the process of rebirth? The answer to this question varies a great deal within the Hindu tradition, depending on which system of belief and practice one consults.

In Advaita Vedānta, which emphasizes the "illusion" part of the concept of Māyā, and claims that Nirguṇa Brahman is ultimately all that there is, liberation from rebirth involves a loss of personal identity—or rather, a realization that one never had a separate personal identity to begin with (also a strong theme of Buddhism). From the perspective of time and space—which is, from the point of view of Advaita, a deluded perspective—the liberated soul, in effect, ceases to exist. The more dualistic, theistic, and devotional schools, however, such as those that are part of the Vaiṣṇava tradition, envision liberation as a loving union with divinity. They even speak of a heavenly afterworld—called Vaikuṇtha—in which the liberated soul lives forever enjoying the infinite beauty of God, not unlike the Heaven of Christianity or the Paradise of Islam.

From a process perspective, I would postulate that liberation would mean taking part with God, as a fully conscious participant, in the never-ending creative process of the actualization of infinite being, consciousness, and bliss in the universe. Much like in Mahāyāna Buddhism, as articulated in the writings of Nāgārjuna, as well as the Tāntric tradition, the distinction between Saṃsāra and Liberation, on this understanding, is not so much an ontological difference between two different realms, but a revolution in the consciousness of the liberated being. When one is liberated from Saṃsāra, we could say, one does not thereby "go" anywhere. One, rather, is transformed *within* the realm of Saṃsāra, which, for oneself, becomes a qualitatively different kind of realm.

A being "in Saṃsāra" is subject to Karma—which on a process understanding means that such a being is minimally free with regard to the collective influences of the past. Such a being, unaware of its interconnections with all other beings, or perhaps only dimly so, can be seen as a perpetual victim, an *object* of experience. Life happens *to* such a being. But a liberated being, having attained a higher degree of cognizance of the causal relations between past and present—and the potentials for the future existing in the present—becomes a master of the karmic process.

What does this mean? Rather than drowning again and again in the ocean of Saṃsāra, such a being learns to surf the waves of cosmic consciousness. In tune with the divine will—perhaps through meditation, or some other yogic or devotional practice—as well as with her fellow beings, the liberated master becomes a conscious co-participant with God in the unfolding of the divine vision of creative potential, an instrument of God in the world. God acts *through* such a being. For such a liberated being, God becomes, as the *Gītā* says, the only true doer of action, and the ultimate enjoyer of its results. Such a being has, in effect, merged with God—not ontologically, but their *wills* have become one.

Such a conception of liberated beings as still active within the universe allows for a robust sense of polytheism in a Hindu process theology. The numerous devatās of Hinduism are conceivable as liberated souls, going about the work of the Supreme, not unlike the celestial Bodhisattvas and cosmic Buddhas of Mahāyāna Buddhism, who work spontaneously for the welfare of all beings.

Religious Pluralism

A pluralistic approach to religious practice and expressions of truth can be seen to be a natural corollary of the Hindu process worldview as I have outlined it here. I have already had occasion to mention the internal diversity of Hinduism—the great variety of approaches to and conceptions of ultimate reality present within the Hindu tradition. The validity of this diversity is confirmed by a process Hindu hermeneutics.

If variety is acceptable within Hinduism, both in theory and in practice—if all the paths that exist within the tradition are viewed as equally "Hindu," despite their particular theological differences—then it does not take much of a logical leap to conclude that religious variety in general is acceptable, that a variety of approaches to ultimate reality may be possible. Such variety is affirmed, for example, in the classical Hindu doctrine of the four *yogas*, or spiritual disciplines, of action (*karma*), wisdom (*jñāna*), and devotion (*bhakti*), with Patāñjali's eight-limbed, or *aṣṭāṅga* yoga, also known as the royal or rājā yoga, as the fourth. Each corresponds to a different temperament. And we have already seen pluralism affirmed in modern Hinduism.

Specific to a process Hindu theology, moreover, is its conception of a variety of ultimate realities—the impersonal principle of creativity, the personal deity, and the universe of actual entities. These could be seen to correspond to the ultimate realities of different types of religion, without reducing these ultimates to one: the impersonal principle to that of the contemplative *jñāna* paths like Advaita Vedānta

and Theravāda Buddhism, God to the Gods of the devotional, theistic religions of the world, and the universe of actual entities to the sacred cosmos of indigenous nature-oriented religions. Hinduism, on this understanding, is a microcosm reflecting the religious diversity of the entire world, just as an actual entity, on a Whiteheadian understanding, is the "one" in whose nature is reflected "the many."[45]

Conclusion

In a Hindu process theology, Nirguṇa Brahman is unmanifest creativity. Saguṇa Brahman is both God and the entities making up the world—what I have called the theocosm. Īśvara, or God, is essentially God as conceived in process thought—the bridge between unmanifest creative potential and the world. Māyā is manifest creativity, creativity in its role as limiting factor, giving rise to limited, finite beings precisely so the infinite can thereby be realized.

Finally, Karma is the regularity, the "inevitable trend towards order" that the divinely coordinated universe exhibits by the divine power of Māyā.

Saṃsāra is the process of rebirth, of wandering through the karmically ordered universe and learning from one's experiences until one reaches Mokṣa, which is a state characterized by a true understanding of the interdependence of all beings, including their mutual implication with divine existence, a conscious participation in the divine creative process. In the state of Mokṣa, one becomes, consciously and joyfully, what one has always been unconsciously (and not so joyfully)—a co-creator, with God, in the ongoing unfoldment of the universe.

This, of course, is all highly experimental and preliminary. But through such an experiment, and further, future elaborations thereon, it is hoped that the Hindu tradition can begin to articulate its vision of reality with a greater clarity to the wider world, and to draw out its implications of respect for both the diversity and the interdependence, as well as the potential divinity—the divine, cosmic, or *theocosmic* consciousness—of all beings.

By way of conclusion, then, I would re-affirm my original proposal. Hinduism has a great potential to act as a model for imagining a harmony and a unity-in-diversity of the religions and the peoples of the world. It contains the conceptual tools for articulating a pluralistic model of truth and religious diversity that balances these two—truth and diversity—without reducing the many to the one. I have simply used process thought to highlight and bring out this already present potential and to translate it into the conceptual terminology of the modern Western world.[46]

Notes

[1] In this essay, I have used diacritical marks, where appropriate, in translating Indic words and names, except in cases in which a name is frequently found in English without such marks (like Mahatma Gandhi, Vishnu, and the *Upanishads*).

[2] David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri), *Hinduism and the Clash of Civilizations* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2001), pp. 170–179.
[3] Cited in Glyn Richards, ed., *A Source-Book of Modern Hinduism* (Curzon Press, 1985), p. 65.
[4] Ibid., pp. 156, 157.
[5] Many such antecedents could be cited—from the *Ṛg Veda* to the *Bhagavad Gītā* to the universalist *bhakti* poets of the late medieval period, such as Kabir and Guru Nanak.
[6] Speaking in particular from a Vedāntic perspective, a strong case can be made that the practices that lead to *Mokṣa*, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth, are conceived in the premodern tradition as available universally to all human beings who are desirous of liberation. An excellent argument to this effect is made with respect to Advaita Vedānta by Roger Marcaurelle in his study of Śaṅkara, *Freedom through Inner Renunciation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000).
[7] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 18.
[8] V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (New Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan, 2003), pp. 83–131.
[9] Though the premodern tradition, as Marcaurelle argues, would accept the idea of yogic experience, and the liberation arising therefrom, as available to all who would be willing to undertake the requisite disciplines, the conception of Vedic scripture as the *product* of such experiences, rather than as the ultimate *norm* in terms of which all such experience is to be evaluated, is thoroughly modern.
[10] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New Press, 2002).
[11] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Corrected Edition) (New York: The Free Press, 1978—first published in 1929), p. 15.
[12] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967—first published in 1933), p. 172.
[13] Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1990).
[14] Savarkar, *Hindutva*, p. 141.
[15] Jeffery D. Long, *Plurality and Relativity: Whitehead, Jainism, and the Reconstruction of Religious Pluralism* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000).
[16] Satguru Shivaya Subramuniyaswami, *Merging with Shiva: Hinduism's Contemporary Metaphysics* (Himalayan Academy, 1999), p. 1186.
[17] Cited in Richards, *A Source-Book of Modern Hinduism*, p. 55.
[18] Ibid.
[19] David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 279.
[20] Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Young India: 1919–1931* (Vol. VIII, 1926) (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1981), p. 30.
[21] Whitehead, *Process and reality*, p. 21.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., p. 31.
[24] Ibid.
[25] *Chandogya Upanishad* 6:1.
[26] *Asato mā sad gamaya, tamaso mā jyotir gamaya, mṛtyor mā-amṛtam gamaya.*
[27] *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upanishad* 2:5.
[28] Ibid.
[29] *Chand. Up.* 6:2.
[30] Pravrajika Vrajaprana, *Vedānta: A Simple Introduction* (Hollywood: Vedānta Press, 1999), p. 2.
[31] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, p. 261 and Whitehead, *Process and reality*, p. 20.
[32] Whitehead, *Process and reality*, p. 348. It is important to note that Whitehead conceives of creativity in terms of the resolution of multiplicity into unity, within the being of a single actual entity—which is what he means when he says "the one"—whereas the Hindu tradition tends to come from the opposite direction—beginning with an original metaphysical unity and moving from there to the universe of perceived multiplicity. The idea that the East begins from within, with the essence of a thing, and moves from there to the empirical reality, from the abstract to the particular, and that the West begins with the perceived reality and moves from there to a generalized ultimate unity, from the particular to the abstract, is one way of characterizing the difference in philosophical styles between the West and India. To the

degree that this is a valid observation (albeit all such generalizations have important exceptions—e.g. Plato—and run the risk of becoming stereotypical), the correspondences between Hindu and process thought that I am outlining in this essay support a case, I think, for the Hindu idea that many paths can lead to the same truth, and that the path one takes, the path that is most appropriate for one, depends upon one's starting point—that, regardless of our starting points, we can still end up reaching the same conclusion.

[33] Ibid., p. 31.

[34] Paul Tillich, for example, famously identifies God with "Being Itself"—a role reserved in process thought for creativity, God being, instead, the Supreme Being. The trend of much recent non-process Christian theology, such as the work of Bishop Spong, has accordingly been towards a depersonalization of God, which is arguably even less orthodox, from a traditional Christian perspective, than process thought!

[35] Whitehead, *Adventures of ideas*, 1967, p. 115. The importance of what Whitehead calls the "doctrine of Immanence," in contrast with classical Christian and Islamic notions of the universe as wholly dependent upon an external reality for it existence, is that only such a doctrine of can guarantee the coherence of a metaphysical system. As Whitehead says elsewhere, "God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification." Whitehead, *Process and reality*, 1978, p. 343.

[36] It is significant that the name of one of the most important Hindu deities, Vishnu, means, literally, "the pervader," "the one who pervades all things."

[37] This phrase is Swāmī Vivekānanda's gloss on *Kena Upanishad* v. 4.

[38] *Bhagavad Gītā* 6:30, translation of Sri Aurobindo.

[39] *Taittirīya Upanishad* 2:1–5.

[40] *Bhagavad Gītā* 7:7, translation of Sri Aurobindo.

[41] Whitehead, *Adventures of ideas*, 1967, p. 160.

[42] The language of "becoming" and "taking on" of finitude does not imply a temporal process—that there was a "beginning" when there was only the One, after which the One "became" the many. Though the tradition utilizes anthropomorphic—and so necessarily temporal—language and imagery to describe it, this process of divine unfoldment occurs at each and every moment.

[43] Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Volume V* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975—first published in 1922), p. 4.

[44] See David Ray Griffin, *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[45] The pluralistic implications of a Hindu process theology are more thoroughly explored in my essay "Anekānta Vedānta: Toward a Deep Hindu Religious Pluralism" in *Deep Religious Pluralism,* edited by David Ray Griffin (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) and make up the main theme of my forthcoming book, *Pluralistic Hinduism: Seeking Unity in Diversity* (I.B. Tauris, 2006).

[46] Portions of this essay, specifically parts of those sections in which I outline a Hindu process theology, appear in another essay of mine entitled "A Whiteheadian Vedanta: Outline of a Hindu Process Theology" in *Process Theology: A Handbook*, edited by Jay McDaniel and Donna Bowman (forthcoming from Chalice Press). My argument that modern Hinduism has more resonances with process thought than with Advaita, which draws upon the works and experiences of Swāmī Dayānanda Sarāswatī, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi, appears in summary form in my aforementioned essay "Anekānta Vedānta: Toward a Deep Hindu Religious Pluralism" in *Deep Religious Pluralism*, edited by David Ray Griffin (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). Both are included with permission.

The Other of Oneself: A Gadamerian Conversation with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism

Leena Taneja

To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we are.[1]

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has traditionally pointed the way towards a hermeneutical understanding of the concept of dialogue or conversation. The highlight of Gadamer's concept of dialogue is encapsulated in the phrase—"a fusion of horizons"—which means that both persons involved in a dialogue occupy a different lifeworld but in order to communicate and understand each other each *must* participate in the other by withdrawing from their own individual preset horizons to form new horizons that genuinely include the other. This fusion is the key to meaningful dialogue and conversation. Dialogue for Gadamer thus is not about walking a mile in another's shoes, a proverbial statement, but rather it is about walking "*beside*" or "*along-side*" the other. It is this which most relevantly characterizes Gadamer's notion of dialogue.

This chapter proposes to ask what it actually means to walk "beside" and "along-side" the other in conversation? I take it that if the real goal of all conversation and dialogical encounters is a deeper and fulfilling understanding of the other and ourselves, something that Gadamer contends is fundamentally true, then the question becomes where and how can we locate this place of mutual understanding? Under what conditions are we able to hear the voice of the other? What in the character and nature of the other makes possible the conditions under which understanding is made possible? While the answer to these questions are sufficiently explore in Gadamer's hermeneutics, this chapter re-addresses these questions from a comparative cross-cultural perspective drawing Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics into discourse with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava hermeneutics.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school will serve two aims in this chapter. Firstly, The Vaishnava school will serve as Gadamer's hermeneutical interlocutor. To that end, the Gauḍīya tradition is the "other"—with whom a comparative dialogue is being sought on the question of hermeneutics. To achieve this second aim, the Gauḍīya

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tradition is treated not as an "other" but as a "subject" that can teach us how to talk to, listen to and understand one another. The first aim is comparative and objective, the second is hermeneutical and subjective.

The challenge here is immense because there actually is no systematic hermeneutical philosophy in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The task of this chapter—which broadly embraces both aims stated above—is to illustrate what a hermeneutical philosophy may look like in this tradition. This will be accomplished by examining how the principles of identity and difference, which lie at heart of the Gauḍīya theological philosophy, embodies some hermeneutical insights that demonstrate how religious transformation is both dialogical and hermeneutic.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is a religious movement that swept across Northern India in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most significant figure of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava movement is Śrī Chaitanya (1486–1533), whose intense devotion to the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sparked a revival of Kṛṣṇa-Bhakti (intense devotion) in the North. While Caitanya wrote little in the way of theology, his key disciples (The Six Gosvāmins) and subsequent followers filled in the theological and philosophical credentials that helped systematize this school of love and devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Central to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology, developed by these disciples, is the doctrine of *Acintyabhedābhedātattva*, a Sanskritic phrase which means simultaneous identity and difference.

In this chapter I would like to explicate the hermeneutical features of this doctrine. I argue essentially that this doctrine is profoundly similar to, yet different from Gadamer's hermeneutical project. I propose to use the principles of identity and difference found in this theological doctrine to illustrate how both these principles purport two different types of communication/dialogue, which coincide with Gadamer's struggle between the methodological and non-methodological. This provocative similarity will set Gadamerian and Vaiṣṇava hermeneutical interpretations along-side each other, offering a rich comparative analysis. This will fulfill the first aim of this chapter.

The second half of this chapter will address the second aim by examining an esoteric religious practice followed by practitioners of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava path called Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana. The nature of this form of religious experience points to a type of ritual hermeneutics, which will allow us to reappraise the aforementioned similarities, in order to highlight some curious hermeneutical differences between these two approaches. With these contrasts I hope to demonstrate how differently the West and East speaks, and how this difference may stem from the different ways—linguistic and non-linguistic—they approach the other.

There is always a danger of course in over-simplifying this binary between East and West; between insiders/outsiders; between self/other. Genuine hermeneutical dialogue—both East and West—transcends these polarizations, as it will be shown, and insists upon honest critique and understanding. The way this communication can and should take place may vary—but the goal is the same and worthy of pursuit. The best way to achieve these aims is through persistent, relentless practice, without which, we may lose the chance to change each other and ourselves for the better. Recently, the National Institute of Health has come out with startling new

research on the brain. It has confirmed that the brain matures in stages, and some of the most rapid neurological activity and development occurs during the adolescent stage of growth. But one interesting piece of research stood out to me— the brain not only develops new connections that spur heightened intellectual activity, but if not nurtured through practice these neuron-connections will cease to function, cease to be neurological possibilities in our brain. So I wonder whether the same is not true of how we communicate with the other. Do we ever lose the chance to listen to and speak to the other, if we, just cease trying to unglue ourselves from our own pre-mediated intellectual positions? Does our practiced stubbornness kept us from letting go so that we cannot participate in and learn from the other? I predict that the more we try, the better we get at it, and the more pathways—neurological and experiential—are open to us. Hermeneutics and neurology may be poles apart, but both agree that experience and praxis is what makes us human and allows us to grow, change and become more fully human. The more we act the role of partners that can walk along side each other, the more fully human we demonstrate ourselves to be.

Gadamer's Critique of Method

In this section I would like to highlight the tension between method and praxis found in Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. The relation between the two, I argue, points to two different types of communication. One which overwhelms and *possesses* the "other" (method) and another which *participates* with and *reproduces* the "other" (praxis). In both cases, it is the nature of "otherness" that defines both types of communication. Along with the inclusion of the other as a necessary partner in the understanding of dialogue and its hermeneutical content, philosophically speaking, otherness implies a concern for issues that abstractly involve distance and time—or the spatial-temporality of dialogue. For to be other—is to be temporally and spatially distant or different from the subject, without which the other would cease to be other, but would become self. The denial of otherness is the reversal of the dialogical process and the extinguishing of self. For both Gadamer and the Vaiṣṇava scholars, the full acknowledgment of the other and the co-relationality of both self/other stands at the heart of the dialogical encounter. Gadamer says, "The other must be experienced not as the other of myself grasped by pure self-consciousness, but as the Thou."[2] The issue of the other conjoins both types of communications to which we now turn.

The beginning of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* revolves around the question of method. In part his argument about method is about the inadequacy of method. In particular, Gadamer's critique against the adaptation of a scientific method—or any method for the human sciences squarely rests on the rejection of the reification of any fixed interpretative perspective. Such perspectives, he argues, attempt to regulate and "enframe" our engagement with the phenomena, and in doing so, disengages the phenomena from the knower's and object's involvement. It entrenches meaning by applying a fixed mode of investigation that constricts the scope of

inquiry. "Method is like enframing because it only allows things to be disclosed in accordance with specific means-ends orientations."[3] Method is linked to the notion of certainty as attained by an attachment to fixed objects.[4] In short, the problem with methodological objectivism was that it pursued the "other" as though it were objectifiable[5] by ossifying and a-historizing the "other" to suit the presumptions built into method in order to make the "other" appear objective and verifiable.[6] Method abstracts and rarifies the subject's and object's role in the development of understanding and meaning.

In contrast, Gadamer's dialectical hermeneutics reverses the subject/object bifurcation found in method. Much like a Derridean deconstructive reversal, Gadamer turns the tables epistemologically so that the questioner/subject becomes the "new object" who is impinged upon by the subject matter, previously the object. The object—the "other" replaces the position of the subject, who now becomes the receiver or the "other." In this dialectical turn of events, the subject encounters the object that poses a question to which the subject responds.[7] The subject is objectified only to the extent that the object can be engaged dialectically. Gadamer says, the "questioner becomes the one who is questioned and . . . the hermeneutical occurrence is realized in the dialectic of the question."[8] It is less a vertical relationship (method) and more akin to a horizontal one. The subject and object *belong* to each in a reciprocal dialectical relationship that transcends the objectivity of the subject by reinscribing both subject and object within the domain of the human facticity and experience.[9] Thus Gadamer deconstructs the subject/object binary by subjectivizing the object, and universalizing the particular.

In a similar deconstructive move, Gadamer problematizes method with the ideas of *praxis, application* and *dialogue*. Praxis is defined by Gadamer as a "form of reasoning and practical knowledge in which there is a mediation between the universal and the particular where both are *codetermined*."[10] Practical knowledge, unlike methodological knowing, "provides a model for a type of rationality that is not predicated upon the self-transparent subject and does not presume access to universal norms of behavior."[11] The linkage of praxis and understanding hinges on the dialectical relation between the subject and its experience, which provides a form of knowledge that is directed toward a concrete situation, not a methodologically-constructed one. In this way, practice is not the mere application of method—a view that recapitulates the idea that method seeks to de-legitimize all particulars by universalizing them. Rather it is the interlacing of a certain mode of being with understanding whereby to understand is to interpret our experience. For understanding is nothing but interpretation since it is always mingled with and co-determined by our own context and experience. Understanding does not prefigure experience, but experience continually discloses understanding and vice versa. What it is to know/be, is what it is to be/know. As one commentator put it, "We always take ourselves along whenever we understand."[12] To know and understand is about applying a meaning to our situation, to the questions we want answered. Method then is the praxis of the existential beingness of the subject.

In this way, Gadamer emphasizes the contextual, factical and unrepeatable quality of human experience. He particularizes human experience by acknowledging

the complex set of sociohistorical factors and forces that are endemic to existential situations.[13] The specificity of human experience cannot be embodied by a universal, rational set of laws and rules that are methodological determined. Conceptually, the universal must embrace the particular by engaging with it dialectically—not methodologically. This is Gadamer's thesis in *Truth and Method*: That truth and understanding are not confirmable by method. Truth exceeds method, and this is what method compels us to admit.[14] Thus, Gadamer overcomes the hubris of method and its pre-structuring tendencies by reversing the logos of subject-oriented verification, and leveling the dialectical field between subject and object to encourage mutual understanding and cooperation, and not a methodologically imposed sense of certainty.

The doctrine of *acintyabhedābheda* found in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school of bhakti can be set along side the Gadamerian method/praxis binary outlined above, offering a rich cross-cultural hermeneutical comparison. This theological doctrine traditionally explains the cosmic relationship between the individual (Jīva-Ātman) and the divine (Kṛṣṇa Bhagavan). The aim of the Gauḍīya path is a pure loving devotion (bhakti) to God or Kṛṣṇa. The relationship between the individual and Kṛṣṇa Bhagavan is of utmost importance. In philosophical terms, Gauḍīya theologians maintains that this relationship is essentially one of differentiation within non-differentiation in which the individual is seen as real and separate from the Absolute, while still maintaining sameness with it.[15] The individual is thus both identical with, yet simultaneously different from or distant from the transcendent. What this amounts to hermeneutically speaking is a constant awareness and consciousness of the individual condition as something wholly individual and human. Even from the perspective of a religious experience, which this doctrine clearly speaks to, the individual religious experience is one of separation from the Absolute—not one of union or Mokṣa, a Vedantic goal which is largely ignored by Gauḍīya practitioners in favor of the joyful ecstasy that comes from experiencing God as "other."[16] If individuality were given up through a communion with the divine, the specific type of pleasure that comes only from a relational experience of differentiation is lost. There is joy in union, but for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, the pleasure of separation is higher and more gratifying. The proverbial saying is that a Vaiṣṇava wants to taste the sugar (difference), not become it (identity).[17] As David Haberman writes in *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, the aim of the Gauḍīya religious path is "not to lose individual being . . . (but rather) the aim of bhakti (love) is the transformation of identity, not the Vedantin identification with the non-differentiated One."[18] Consequently, spiritual transformation, as it is described here, is a recovery of individuality and difference through a relation of love with God and the abandonment of an identity of sameness. Transformation locates itself in that imprecise space between identity and difference in which the Jīva-Ātman stands continually between the threshold of union with and separation from the divine. Bhakti or pure love locates itself in the liminal space in between the individual and the divine relation wherein the subject/object polarities are perennial renegotiated in the unmediated ways of love.

The dialogue of love articulated in the *acintyabhedābheda* doctrine has hermeneutical undertones that speak to the dynamic nature of the subject/object relationship

explicated by Gadamer's critique of method. For one, like Gadamer, the Gauḍīya system is rooted in the value of personal experience since individuality (difference) is stressed over oneness or the merging of self and God. It is through the enactment of a variety of interpersonal relationships with the Absolute that the individual can achieve salvation and personal transformation. Another intriguing similarity between these schools arises in their criticism of methodological conformity, which thwarts the collaborative and active nature of hermeneutical exchanges. For example, by devaluing identity in favor of a dialectical relationship between both identity and difference, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava teachers reject the certainty of uniformity that aligns itself with Gadamer's criticisms of method. Method like identity suppresses and marginalizes the erratic quality of all human experience by waving the magic wand of absolutization. The I-Thou relation is emptied of its dynamic content when method/identity is superimposed upon it.

What this means in terms of communication structures itself in two ways. The identity/method correlation yields a form of communication that functions meta-linguistically and monochromatically to de-link the "other" from the web of intentional and social-historical relations in which it exists, whereas the subject is the transparent-logocentric unifier through which communication is made possible. The identity/method form of communication is one in which the roles of subject-other are clearly delineated in vertical terms. The subject speaks for the voice of the other.

The second form of communication aligns with the principles of praxis and difference. This type of communication—found in both Gadamerian and Gauḍīya sources—is hermeneutical in nature as it expresses itself through human experience and finitude. Both sources demonstrate that experience involves "an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive."[19] Gadamer calls this "negativity"—a swerve that unlocks our expectations of what it is the other means to communicate. "Within experience we are continually faced with the inevitable disappointments of our expectations, with the shattering of our accustomed way of life . . . (thus) experience engenders insight into contingency: The insight that we are not master's of our own fate."[20] In light of this quote by Gadamer, I take the word "negativity" to mean the gap that separates our expectations of the other from our insights about the other, where insight is something we do not expect or seek, but something that surprises us or happens to us.[21] Experience is without rhyme or reason because it is contingent. The unpredictable nature of human experience disappoints our expectations, says Gadamer, not so much by limiting our expectations, but by *exceeding* them through their confrontation with finitude. The simultaneity of the Acintya doctrine (simultaneously oneness and difference), much like Jacques Derrida's supplementarity, evokes a similar sense of excessivity and surplus, constituted by its quality of continuity. The antinomy of the simultaneous dialectical relation between identity and difference has a destabilizing effect as it maintains a concurrent and contemporaneous positionality of difference *within* non-difference. This destabilization works hermeneutically in the dialogic love encounter of I and Thou or Self/Other because the experience of loving Kṛṣṇa is always *deferred*

because of the acintya or inconceivable quality of Jīva-Bhagavan relation. The Jīva is constantly displaced and discombobulated by his/her love for Kṛṣṇa because the nature of bhakti is such that it re-inscribes the Jīva within a relation between identity/difference with Kṛṣṇa that is eternal. The devotee's anxious longing for Kṛṣṇa is never satiated, but perennially deferred. In this way, love works *negatively* since it always succeeds in transgressing and overcoming the devotee's expectations. It never rests, but continually surprises, inspiring the devotee's love to ever greater heights.

Echoing Gadamer then Vaiṣṇavas acknowledge that a genuine dialogic encounter must deconstruct expectation in favor of anticipation in order to make room for the insight of a negative experience that, using Harold Bloom's word, "swerves" from the paradigm of originality whereby a productive and positive creativity is born out of a truly experiential form of experience.[22] The locus of expectation frames the subject against the "other" it seeks to confront and consume into its unifying methodologies. Anticipation, on the contrary, is expectation released from subjectivity thereby pushing the subject/object complex into the dis-enframed world of intersubjectivity in which the subject and other belong to one another as de-possessed subjects/others. The distance between expectation and anticipation locates the hybrid place of dialogical exchange that, as Homi Bhabha might say, is a liminal space of negotiation. The distanciation that marks this location between expectation and anticipation is one engendered by the encounter between expectation and finitude for it is this "lack" that transforms expectation towards anticipation. One might argue that expectation and anticipation correspond to two different types of hermeneutical experience.[23] Expectation corresponds to a notion of experience in which as Gadamer says, "We understand the other person in the same way that we understand any other typical event in our experiential field—i.e., he is predictable."[24] Further on Gadamer writes that this kind of hermeneutical experience is "naïve faith in method and in the objectivity that can be attained through it."[25] Moving from expectation into anticipation, Gadamer admits another type of hermeneutic experience in which the Thou is experienced as a Thou.[26] In this type of dialogical participatory relation both parties "belong together"[27] and are open to listening to and understanding each other in ways that force us to voluntarily set aside our own prejudices and forethoughts. This for Gadamer is real openness. "Openness to the Other involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so."[28] To this end, each person in a conversation is "forced" to recognize their limitations—their finitude—and doing so, moves towards a genuine dialogue and real understanding. The hermeneutical experience can thus properly be characterized as a shift from expectation towards anticipation in which a subject-object relation (expectation) is replaced by a subject-subject relation (anticipation) with the other that is marked by a more concrete recognition of the historicity and transitoriness of our understanding. As Gadamer writes, "experience is experience of human finitude. The experienced man knows that all foresight is limited and all plans uncertain. In him is realized the truth value of experience."[29]

Speaking of the anticipatory effects on conversation, Gadamer comments that the more a genuine conversation is—which I take to be one that is always "misguided" by expectation—the "less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is one that we never wanted to conduct. Rather ... we *fall* into conversation ... "[30] The word—to fall—used here by Gadamer characterizes the non-intentional, non-methodological, almost effortless quality of dialogue. This lack of agency unbounds the subject from its logocentric place as intentional agent, thus letting him/her literally fall into dialogue. A dialogue is "not based on transposing oneself onto another person ... (identity) but rather involves a person's immediate *participation* with another."[31] (difference). In Gadamer's fusion of horizons, a person opens herself up to the other by accepting the other's point of view as valid or having "a substantive rightness."[32] Such that "to reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which *we do not remain what we are*."[33] The texture of dialogue is appropriation qua de-appropriation vis-à-vis the other/self. The subject appropriates and de-appropriates the other by *negatively* anticipating the position and circumstances of the other—as that which is other than one's own.

The anticipatory position is thus "in front" of the dialogue not "behind it." That is to say, the self/other do not anticipate each other "behind" or before the dialogue, words used by Ricoeur. But rather the dialogue stands "in front," unfolding itself through their participation in it. So that it (the dialogue) cannot be imposed upon, but rather, says Ricoeur, it is an opportunity to "expose ourselves to the text (dialogue) and receiving from it an enlarged self ... "[34]

Paul Ricoeur refers to the dialectic of method/praxis in Gadamer's work as an antinomy between alienating distanciation and participatory belonging.[35] But while participatory belonging is the desired choice—at least for Gadamer—Ricoeur argues that this antinomy needs to be overcome. This alternative offered by Ricoeur is one I would like to explore further as it pertains to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava School. In the preceding sections I have shown how the doctrine of Acintyabhedābheda can be compared to Gadamer's dialecticism in interesting ways. However, in the following section I would like to go a little deeper in exploring how the Gauḍīya approach ritualizes and dramatizes dialogue as a hermeneutical category in non-linguistic ways. To do this, I will look at five main themes:

1. The nature of horizons
2. Identity transformation
3. The correlation between *sādhana* and method
4. The role of participation and imitation in hermeneutical ritual activities
5. The concept of play in hermeneutics

To this end, I will re-revisit some of the similarities asserted above, but with a view to refining these similarities in ways that illustrate inherent differences in these approaches.

Ritual Hermeneutics

Unlike Gadamer, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas do not share a linguistic-based perspective of hermeneutical understanding and self-transformation. Though the importance of transformation, change and experience are, like Gadamer's hermeneutics, key elements in this system, there is a reliance on ritual over language as a means for hermeneutical understanding and transformation. One could say that dialogue is ritualized in this school in dramatic ways—leading to what I have termed ritual hermeneutics. In spite of this, both Gadamerian and Vaiṣṇava sources agree that—the "other" is the primary hermeneutical vehicle for change and discovery, an idea that is central to the study of hermeneutics. The role of the "other"—then serves as a theoretical linchpin that unites Gadamerian and Vaiṣṇava approaches to communication and dialogue.

Much of the following material in this section is drawn from David L. Haberman's *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana* and David R. Kinsley's *The Divine Player: A Study in Kṛṣṇa Līlā*. I would like to begin by first outlining the nature of the individual or the Jīva-ātman in the Gauḍīya philosophical tradition. The situated subject or Jīva ātman is composed of two energies or *śaktis*—*Svarūpa Śakti* and *Māyā Śakti*. *Svarūpa-Śakti* is the internal *śakti* that emanates from Bhagavan or Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being. It "constitutes the intrinsic, essential and perfect selfhood of Bhagavan, and is therefore completely inseparable from him."[36] *Māyā-Śakti* is the external *śakti* of Bhagavan. Maya, which means "illusion" works to conceal and distort the essential nature of Kṛṣṇa Bhagavan. Hence, although *Māyā śakti* essentially comes from Bhagavan, it is not an "essential" part of Bhagavan."[37] It is extrinsic to Bhagavan. The Jīva Ātman is composed of both these internal and external *śaktis* or energies.

Consequently, the Jīva-Ātman is considered to be a marginal *śakti* because it holds an ambivalent position composed of these two—internal and external *śaktis*, while continuing to remain distinct from both. Standing at the margins between the *svarūpa* and *māyā śaktis*, Jīva-Ātman is a hybrid and displaced identity. Its porous and uncertain ontological position locates itself in-between the divine and human condition. The marginal *śakti* is a fragment composite of two identities that places it in a state of discord and disillusionment. Haberman writes: "Standing on the marginal line between Svarūpa-Śakti and Māyā śakti of Brahman, Jīva-śakti reveals a dual inclination for divine as well as mundane life."[38] The term used to refer to it is *tatastha* meaning "standing on the borderline."[39] This in-between state of ontological distanciation connotes a place of liminal transformation and dissonance by which the Jīva Ātman is simultaneously both one with Svarūpa-śakti and Māyā-Śakti—yet concurrently different from both of them. This brings to mind the longer philosophical phrase—abhedābhedā, meaning sameness and difference, meaning here that the Jīva-śakti is both different and non-different from the source— Svarūpa-Śakti because of its partial identity with Māyā-śakti. This unique existential position of dislocation marks the place of the Jīva Ātman in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

From a theological perspective, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas argue that the Jīva Ātman is ensnared by the attractions created by Maya, and fails to recognize the temporary, material nature of these allurements, which causes them to forget who they really are.[40] They mistakenly identify themselves with the world of phenomena—the external māyā-śakti—whereas their true identity lies in reconnecting to the internal Svarūpa-śakti of Bhagavan, which is part of their nature.[41] The goal then for the Jīva Ātman is to resolve their ontological in-betweenness.

From this we can gather that the Jīva Ātman embodies two identities and two horizons or worlds. Haberman's makes a very good point that is instructive here in terms of the connection between identity and horizon. He states that, "Identity is what locates the self in a particular body which resides in a particular world."[42] Identity is linked to a particular horizon or a particular reality only through a particular type of body. It is the body that locates identity. But since the Jīva Ātman straddles two identities and horizons—salvation is a shift from one identity/horizon to the other. This movement from one to the other horizon occurs by what may be termed a form of ritual hermeneutics.

To understand how the Jīva Śakti shifts from one horizon to another, it is necessary to briefly provide a little more background about the nature of the religious experience in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava School. Haberman explains that the "Ultimate reality for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava is revealed in the form of a cosmic drama–Kṛṣṇa-lila. Its highest form is the Vraja-līlā.[43] The goal of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is union with the Ultimate Reality of Kṛṣṇa through love (bhakti) which is conceived of as an eternal participation in the emotional dramatic world of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes or *līlās*.[44] While there are many stages to awakening the dormant love for Kṛṣṇa residing in the heart, Gauḍīya scholars outline two important ones: Bhakti can be aroused by strictly following scriptural injunction (vidhi)—called *Vaidhī Sādhana bhakti* or through the spontaneous attachment for Kṛṣṇa— called *Rāgānugā Sādhana bhakti*.[45]

Sādhana—a word used in both paths—is defined as "the means by which an emotional relationship is realized."[46] It is essentially a form of religious method that is practiced in order to ignite the flame of bhakti in the devotees (bhakta) heart for Kṛṣṇa. In the case of the Vaidhī path, sādhana is "motivated by the fear of sin."[47] The bhakta is required to listen to (*śravaṇa*), remember (*smaraṇa*), sing about (*kīrtana*) and mediate (dhyāna) and otherwise celebrate the stories of Kṛṣṇa and his companions in Vraja.[48] In this way, through continuous, *methodical* effort—the bhakta learns the stories of the Bhagavata Purāṇa, one of the key Vaiṣṇava scriptures in which the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are narrated. This is, for all intensive purposes, a largely rule-governed sādhana or methodical form of religiosity. This brings to mind Gadamer's comments on the rationalization and objectifying nature of method. The overarching and predetermining characteristics of method are readily identifiable in the Vaidhī Sādhana path, which advocates a dogmatic adherence to external rules and laws for the cultivation of devotion toward Kṛṣṇa. Kinsley states that this path teaches "submission to Kṛṣṇa . . .. however, it is considered limited and mechanical as it is induced by external forms."[49] The Vaidhī form of religiosity thus is more outwardly motivated and systematic and less intuitive and emotional.

Haberman states quite convincingly that commentators of the bhakti path or *mārga* have often denied the place of method or yogic techniques in order to ensure that love or faith is "given" or bestowed by Kṛṣṇa, not achieved through individual exertion.[50] Haberman argues in contrast that bhakti does employ methodical practices to generate emotion. He concludes that both the Vaidhī and Rāgānugā paths apply a form of religious method to achieve their end goal—*premā* or love for Kṛṣṇa. But I would argue that like Gadamer while Vaidhī bhakti clearly exalts the importance of method, in the case of Rāgānugā bhakti, method is both used and disused. Rāgānugā bhakti, which follows sequentially from Vaidhī bhakti is centered on the concept of *raga*—or complete absorption in one's selected deity.[51] This form of bhakti emphasizes a lack of intentionality and a break from the law. Like Derrida's concept of supplementarity, Raga—or passion denotes the excess and surplus of love, which flows spontaneously and effortlessly from the Jīva-Ātman to the object of the bhakta's devotion, Kṛṣṇa. This love—knows no bounds or limits—and transgresses all methodological and epistemological barriers and distinctions. Its unpredictability and unexpectedness gives it the "eventfulness" of anticipation. Thus while a religious sādhana is crucial to the religious experience of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, its use in both the Vaidhī and Rāgānugā paths yields a different relationship to method in both. Vaidhī emphasizes the need for spiritual methods to achieve bhakti, whereas Rāgānugā recognizes the need to use the limits of method to supercede and transgress those boundaries. Rāgānugā Sādhana evokes Michael Foucault's definition of transgression in *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice*—as that which "carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its immanent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes, to experience its positive truth in its downward fall."[52] I find Foucault's words to be very illuminating here in considering the nature of method in the Gauḍīya religious system. Vaidhī bhakti represents the properly ordered path that conforms to rules and laws, while Rāgānugā bhakti *unmakes* these rules through its disruption of the methodological order. It, as Foucault says, forces the limit to face its own demise, its own destruction by pushing the limit to its end. Likewise, the Rāgānugā path pushes the limits of method to its limit in order to move pass method and into the unlimited realm of love. Love surpasses method because the field of love is a transgressive one that makes and unmakes the self and other in manifold ways. It is never stagnant but constantly dynamic and overflowing with emotion. It is this—excessivity in love—which the Rāgānugā path stresses over and over again, and it is this feature, which fundamentally distinguishes the Vaidhī and Rāgānugā paths.

Once the bhakta has achieved a taste (raga) or desire for Kṛṣṇa that freely arises in the heart, he/she moves toward the path of Rāgānugā bhakti sādhana. In this more esoteric form of bhakti, the bhakta enters into the world of Vraja by imitating one of the companions of Kṛṣṇa through a form of ritual role-playing. These divine companions of Kṛṣṇa—his servants, friends and parents, and beloveds each serve as transcendental role models located in the world of Vraja—Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode. These paradigmatic individuals, as Haberman calls them, each have a particular type of emotional relationship (*rasa*) with Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, which the bhaka *participates* in through a form of dramatic mimicry.

These exemplar transcendental models are called *śaktis* because they emanate from Kṛṣṇa Bhagavan and are intrinsic to his nature. These *śaktis* are described as *acintya* and *svābhavika*. Acintya means that the *śaktis* are both inconceivably both the same and different from the source of their *śakti*—Kṛṣṇa Bhagavan.[53] While, svabhavika emphasizes that the *śaktis* are "not exterior to the Lord, but are intimate and natural to him."[54] Due to these qualifications, these *śaktis* are models of perfection, who display a perfect form of bhakti called *rāgāmika bhakti*, an intense and spontaneous type of love.[55] The goal of the Rāgānugā path is to follow in the footsteps of a particular transcendental model by imitating them—either mentally or physically through visualization techniques, mental meditation and physically mimicking the actions and emotions of the transcendental paradigm. In this way, the practitioner shares in the identity of the exemplar model by immersing herself in the emotional and physical features exemplified by the transcendental paradigm. Slowly with practice, the bhakta begins to absorb into the identity and life world of the paradigmatic individual. But and this is an important point, while the bhakta imbibes the emotional states of the exemplar model in the earthly realm—he/she remains both identical to and different from the paradigmatic individual. In other words, the bhakta remains dialectically bound to two identities and two horizons throughout this dialectic encounter. The bhakta represents a paradoxical identity—one earthly (Jīva-Ātman) and the other divine (Transcendental Other)—which he/she vacillates between as the bhakta participates in, re-presents and recreates the Other both internally and externally.

It may appear though that this participation is hardly dialectical since the transcendental paradigm is perfect and unable to change. The transcendental paradigm is like the Platonic forms, existing in the intelligible realm. Each particular earthly manifestation must participate in the perfection of the forms to achieve their own perfection. Arguably, this sounds more like Platonic metaphysics than hermeneutics. I think this is a hasty conclusion because when the bhakta assumes one of the exemplary emotional roles displayed by the original characters of Vraja, he/she appropriates the emotional world of the other *in her own way*, a fact that is largely overlooked. This may seem to be a huge, unsubstantiated leap, but let me try and explain. By its own admission, the Rāgānugā path is an "intense and *spontaneous* type of bhakti"[56] that manifests naturally in the heart of the bhakta. The bhakta, in a sense, does not choose this path consciously, but is awakened by the love arising genuinely from a place deep in the heart. I infer from this that while the sādhana calls for the bhakta to imitate the feelings and dispositions of the transcendental exemplar, this does not imply total duplication. Kinsley concurs: "Rāgānugā, however, is not understood to be slavish imitation only. At a certain point, when the devotee begins to feel a strong identification with the model he is imitating, he is encouraged to behave freely within the confines of the character he is portraying."[57] S.K De responds in kind, arguing that the Rāgānugā path "follows the natural inclination of the heart, and depends entirely upon one's own emotional capacity of devotion."[58] Moreover, the Vraja character one chooses to imitate in freely chosen by the bhakta based on his/her own feelings for Kṛṣṇa. It can be concluded then that the Rāgānugā bhakti sādhana involves a dialectical relationship between the bhakta and the transcendental other that engenders a type of participatory communication,

which takes into account the unique emotional inclinations of each bhakta. Rather than offering a form of communication that is mere imitation and repetition, this form of dialogue encourages and enables the bhakta is freely express their distinct individuality and perspective. The experiential side of this model of communication is also emphasized by the bhakta's participation with the other, which is described as playful, creative and imaginative. The bhakta's reenactment of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are considered līlā or divine play implying that this ritual dialogue is de-structured, rendering a more spirited and dynamic encounter. Hermeneutically speaking, the dialogic encounter between bhakta and transcendental other is deeply rooted in the value of human creativity and imagination as necessary components of communication.

There are other hermeneutical features disclosed by this model of ritual communication between the bhakta and the paradigmatic other. These encounters illustrate a deeply personal, experiential and transformative form of hermeneutical experience. Like Gadamer's fusion of horizons, from the point of view of communication, by creatively and imaginatively patterning his/her behavior on the companions of Kṛṣṇa, what the bhakta succeeds in doing is immersing in the other's point of view. This inter-dialogic relationship may point the way to illustrating how inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues can succeed in understanding the other by passing over to another point of view, and subsequently relativizing one's own.[59] To interpret and dialogue with the other involves being mindful of the limitations of one's own point of view and being willing to interrogate one's viewpoints by opening them up to the other's point of view. From a religious perspective, the bhakti school offers a unique example of how important it is to be willing to submit to another's point of view for a genuine communication to occur.

The shift from one horizon—marginal—to another horizon—transcendental-takes place ritually through a hermeneutical dialogue between the Jīva Śakti and a transcendental Other. This transformation of identity, which lies at the heart of Rāgānugā sādhana bhakti provides some valuable hermeneutical clues. For one, it highlights the malleable nature of religious and physical identities that act as sites of intervention and radical change whereby static identities become dialectic ones that admit the "other" through a dialectical form of ritual participation. The same is true of the interior world in which the religious practitioner is situated. It too is ritually constructed through the practitioner's intentions and actions, which animates and informs the ritual process. The ritual action acts dialectically, linking the practitioner to a certain ritualized persona associated with the paradigmatic "other." Not unlike Gadamer's horizons, thus the Gauḍīya school depicts the religious practitioner's situational context as a fluid and negotiable place of discord and transformation, which acts as place of re-appropriation and contestation. Where the practitioner finds him/herself situated religiously is not a finished structure, but an open one that make possible or provides access to other life worlds and other identities. Horizons are constructed by circumstances that are dynamic and imaginative which function to anchor the subject to a certain set of meaningful circumstances, which are continually restructured and redefined.

But in order to act dialectically, ritual works both constructively and deconstructively. That is, it deconstructs the practitioner's biological identity, what we have

been calling its marginal identity (Svarūpa śakti and māyā-śakti) while simultaneously working to reconstruct its siddha-rāpa or perfected identity. Thus, the self is constituted by a dialectic between two existential positions—discordance and condensation. The bhakta's imitation of the paradigmatic other creates an unstable site of contestation and condensation that simultaneously deconstructs and reformulates the bhakta's identity. The ritual performances, visualizations and poetic narratives that serve to objectively and imaginatively recreate the paradigmatic individual help the bhakta to *participate* in and dialogue with the Other ritually. The ritual practices and narratives work dialectically to destabilize the bhakta's identity by unsettling its marginal status as Jīva-Ātman thereby re-configuring its new siddha-identity. In this way, the Vraja characters are employed in a ritual performance to help construct the practitioner's perfected identity or Siddha-rāpa.

Victor Turner's work on ritual suggests some possible parallels here that are instructive. He explains that ritual actions like singing, remembering, meditating, dancing, feasting causes "an exchange between the two referents in which the biological one is ennobled and the normative referent is charged with emotional significance."[60] This statement suggests that ritual exchanges like the dramatic re-enactments displayed by the practitioners of the Gauḍīya path are interactive and interdependent, making the exchanges ones in which both partners are altered by the encounter. This "fusion of horizons" produces a cathartic effect, causing a real transformation in character and structure that is not linguistic but ritually-based. From this analysis we can conclude that the process of ritualization like hermeneutics locates the subject and the other in liminal space midway between two existential positions that are mutually co-dependent and co-relational. So that ritual, as Victor Turner comments, like hermeneutics "tends to occur frequently in the interstices or the edges of something"[61] and it is here where genuine dialogue and transformation may be found.

Another point of connection can be found between hermeneutics and the role of story telling in the Gauḍīya school. This requires a separate treatment, so I will only allude to it here. The Rāgānugā bhakti path is grounded in the ever-reconstructive act of interpretation through the telling and re-enactment of stories from the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.[62] The stories of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa are performed by the interpretative acts of drama, mental meditation, and play-acting. The narrative activity re-presents the world of the Vraja by the process of telling the stories of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and reliving them by acting them out. These stories define a constructive activity that views making narrative sense of our lives as a creative process of discovery.[63] The subject's body is transported imaginatively and creatively from one form of selfhood to another's through the force of ritualized narrative activities. The narrative identity formed through the re-interpretation of the Kṛṣṇa stories treats the practitioner not only as an actor replaying a story, but also as an author participating in re-telling the stories of Kṛṣṇa.[64] The key point here is that stories, as Ricoeur puts it, are a "dialectic of remembrance and anticipation."[65] When we relive them, we recall the past like an expectation or an old memory carried over within a text, almost intact. Our expectations, sediment into our past, are only dialectically retrievable in the anticipation of something other—something

unexpected.[66] The other (bhakta) recovers the narrative expectations of the stories of Kṛṣṇa imaginatively by re-enacting the stories differently, creating a dialectic between remembrance and anticipation that resituates the narrative past ritually in the present. Stories of Kṛṣṇa's past-times are re-imbibed with new meaning again each time they are re-played and re-appropriated by the ritual play of Rāgānugā sādhana. In this way, the mimetic narrative activity hermeneutically reconfigures the identity of the practitioner through the dialectical processes of remembrance and anticipation, illustrating how narratives are not merely constraining, closed systems of meaning, but always remain open to revision and change. Kṛṣṇa's narratives are thus reenacted, recreated, and re-incorporated by the practitioner in ways that enable her to make meaningful sense of her life.

Hermeneutical similarities are aplenty between eastern and western hermeneutical traditions. But one stark difference remains: In the West hermeneutics is grounded in language. At the end of Part II of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes: "Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which the partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another."[67] Language is the medium that binds together both participants in a dialogue, drawing them into a space of mutual understanding and collaboration. Yet in the Gauḍīya case, the mutual bond is bhakti. It is a distinct form of language—which functions non-linguistically. In an essay by Thomas A. Carlson titled: "Apophatic Apology: On the Language of Mystical Unknowing and Being-Toward Death" this form of communication is described as a rhetorical mode of language found in the Western mystical traditions. He says that mystical traditions use a form of language or rhetoric called "apophasis," an "un-saying" that denies or negates. . . "[68] It stems from the premise that "God must ultimately remain inconceivable and therefore ineffable."[69] Following this, "any thinking concerning God must finally proceed negatively and paradoxically by removing or undoing thought and language, precisely through the linguistic practice of apophasis or unsaying. . . "[70] This type of rhetoric attempts to "transcend language through language."[71]

Bhakti, in a similar vein, subverts language by functioning in the Gauḍīya hermeneutical system as a spiritual practice that is not a mode of speaking but rather a mode of acting ritually. Doing is privileged over speech in this system because language is seen as inadequate, historical and limited to the human realm, while the experiential side of acting works around language or through language to overcome the contextual limitations of language. Oddly enough it is the contextual particularities of language that ground Gadamer's hermeneutical framework since to enjoy a dialogue, a common language is an absolute necessity. For him, it is the web of human experiences and relationships which locates a person within a particular lifeworld that is dependent on language. We find ourselves, he claims, in a world composed of a web of linguistic structures that we are constantly moving through as we transform ourselves through an understanding of others and the world we live in.[72]

In certain respects, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism shares a similar vision of transformation and understanding. The worshipper does find him/herself in a myriad world

of structures—cultural, religious, historical and social—through which he/she must move through. The ability to transcend these structures is the aim of the bhakti path. It seeks above all to use bhakti as force of real transformation to supercede these human constructions and attain an understanding of the self. Their argument against language is simply that language re-locates us within a lifeworld, a tradition and a social and historical framework, while bhakti seeks to overcome this situation. Despite its rejection of language and its adaptation of a non-linguistic form of communication, bhakti employs many hermeneutical features in its form of bhakti as dialogue.

These differences between the Gadamerian and Gauḍīya school of bhakti are to be conceived not in any negative sense, but should more adequately be understood as points of hermeneutical contact that enrich and deepen both discourses. To that end, the question of the female voice offers many useful theoretical intersections between these schools. While the subject is vast, requiring a separate treatment in itself, here I will only point out how the Vaiṣṇavic school offers an alternative to the question of the feminine voice/identity, which, by some theorists' accounts, is muted in Gadamer.

Feminist interpretations of Gadamer have included critics and supporters. Critics allege that Gadamer is, at heart, a conservative, whose adherence to the ideas of "tradition," "prejudice" and "language" rehabilitates an oppressive normative model of epistemology.[73] His supporters, in contrast, have deployed Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics to legitimize and extend the gender question beyond these seemingly oppressive tendencies.[74] Gadamer arguably misses the "woman question" but in missing the question, as many have contended, he, oddly enough, encourages more theoretical feminist interventions because he does not close it off, but keeps the discourse open in remaining "silent" on the question. Nonetheless, it may still be the case that Gadamer does not do enough. For example feminists have used Gadamer's fusion of horizons to think about the issue of constructed identities. The fusion of horizons suggest that textual meaning does not reside in the text nor with the reader, but in some fusion of the two, similarly, a gendered identity may be conceived of not as an innate identity nor a purely constructed one, but rather a combination of the two, a fusion of horizons.[75] But if gendered identities are interpretations, Gadamer also contends that there is such a thing as *better* interpretations, which more consistently relate the part in a coherent way with the whole. The problem then becomes can we talk about a more coherent gendered identity, that is more coherent and consistent, presumably with normative value systems? Do these revisions "attempt to "cure" homosexuality, to alter bodies to cohere with chromosomal observations, and to constrain individuals within the monolithic gender identities they are "meant" to have."?[76] From this perspective, Gadamer's insistence on "intelligent unities of meaning" remains conservative and constraining.[77]

So while these intersections are fruitful, they are limited. The Gauḍīya alternative, however, from a feminist perspective, integrates the feminine, the emotive and the masculine categories by putting them under erasure. In this deconstructive move, the feminine and the masculine are not denied by this erasure by allowed to dance and play. This can be seen in various theological concepts and devotional practices in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. For example, Śrī Caitanya, the 16th century saint

and mystic, is an ecstatic devotional figure who ignited the bhakti movement in the medieval period. From a traditional standpoint, Śrī Caitanya, while not only an historical figure, is an embodiment of the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, the feminine principle. Śrī Caitanya appeared, for theological reasons, so that Kṛṣṇa may "taste" the love that his beloved Rādhā, had for him, something he could not do without *becoming her*. The incarnation of Caitanya is the fulfillment of this divine desire, in which both the feminine and the masculine recombine in experience love or bhakti. Śrī Caitanya represents how feminine and masculine identities are frequently bended, crossed and displaced in this tradition, which does not seek to fix women or men into preset containers that define and limit the possibilities of their experience of love or God. Similar gender-bending experiences practiced by devotees in the Rāgānugā path include dressing and acting as one's chosen female paradigmatic individual, a practice that is often associated with the Sahajiya Vaiṣṇava traditions with its tantric influences. In this way, these examples illustrate that the feminine is not constrained by the straitjacket of her body or her gender or what is intelligible, objective and meaningful in some unitary sense, her identity is *differential*, in a Derridean sense, skewed and innumerable in the possibilities it presents.

A final key difference between these two approaches is their end goal. The ritual dialectic between identity and difference played out in Rāgānugā bhakti sādhana eventually leads to absorption (*āveṣa*). The play between bhakta and the transcendental paradigm gives way to total identification with the dramatic character. Haberman writes that "The goal of the Rāgānugā bhakti sādhana is to forget the old self completely and permanently and become thoroughly absorbed in the true identity of the paradigmatic individual."[78] Other commentators propose that it is like "stepping out of, or from, one order into another."[79] The participation and reproduction turns into an actualization wherein the imagined becomes the reality and the profane—a restoration of the sacred. But while the bhakta is subsumed into the other, and to this extend there is complete union, as mentioned earlier according to the Gauḍīya path the bhakta never absorbs into Kṛṣṇa, but remains eternally separate in order to enhance the feeling of love for the beloved Kṛṣṇa. This is the bhakta's eternal existential position in relation to the divine being. So, on the one hand this school of bhakti thought appears to, in its final goal, remain open-ended, endless deferring the pleasure of the Lord and his devotee in the perennial dance of his līlā. This continuity of divine play reflects the dynamic, free-flowing excessivity of all hermeneutical discourse that continually pushes against its limits, transgressing rules and laws erected to hold in the ebullient gush of ecstatic love and devotion for Kṛṣṇa. In the Gadamerian case, in contrast, the closure of the play may come in the fusion of horizons or the "intelligent unities of meaning."

Nonetheless, perhaps this is where hermeneutics can be properly located in the religious and cross-cultural experience—bridging together the realms of the sacred and the profane. For if hermeneutics brings us starkly in front of our own mortality as finite beings, it also has the capacity to rejuvenate us religiously by deepening our ability to connect with what is wholly other than us. Thinking about finitude and bhakti hermeneutically suggests that both offer compelling similarities. Both are deeply rooted in the personal and the experiential, both push and transcend

boundaries of identity, gender and life-worlds in constructive and deconstructive ways. Both operate in the realm of anticipation, eventfulness and chance, making room for the unexpected. Both function experientially at the level of intersubjectivity to unlock the hold of expectation resulting from the occupation of one horizon and enabling the occupation of two horizons—simultaneously. Finally both function—linguistically. In the West or at least in the case of Gadamer, language positively anchors our ability to situate ourselves in the world in meaningful ways. In the bhakti case, language works negatively through the denial of words and the resurrection of the importance of action performed ritually.

Conclusion

In *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays In Comparative Philosophy*, the author Daya Kriṣṇa in his essay "Comparative Philosophy: What It is and What it Ought to Be" writes that "all comparative studies imply simultaneously an identity and a difference."[80] An inherent contradiction lies at the heart of any comparative undertaking, which is ultimately about looking at "another entity from the viewpoint of that which is not itself."[81] "They" will always be different than "us" and no attempt to gloss over this contradiction through the universalizing tendencies of method will erase this contradiction. Hans-Georg-Gadamer and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava schools can succeed in speaking to each other as equal partners in conversation because they acknowledge the necessity of difference as the basis of any genuine dialogue. Instead of trying to escape from the contradiction of self/other or us/them or East/West, hermeneutical dialogue promotes the possibility of accepting difference as an instrument of transformation and possibility that works through the differences between cultures, religions and disciplinary boundaries to achieve a viable and productive form of communication. The subject works along side and through the other to create new understandings and meanings that strengthen our differences so that they emerge not as hindrances but assets that nurture mutual understanding and communication.

Notes

1 Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Second Revised Edn. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Trans.). New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1999, p. 379.
2 Ibid., p. 343.
3 Dicenso, James. *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth: A Study in the Work of Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur.* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990, p. 90.
4 Ibid., p. 91.
5 Ibid., p. 93.
6 Ibid., p. 185.
7 Ibid., p. 165.
8 Gadamer, *TM*, p. 462.

[9] Ibid., p. 461.
[10] Bernstein, J. Richard. "What is the Difference That Makes a Difference? Gadamer, Habermas and Rorty." In Brice, R. Wachterhauser (ed.). *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1986, p. 346.
[11] Dicenso, *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth*, p. 104.
[12] Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Joel Weinsheimer (Trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 115.
[13] Dicenso, *Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth*, p. 103.
[14] Weinsheimer, Joel C. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 41.
[15] Haberman, David. *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 38.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Gadamer, *TM*, p. 356.
[20] Risser, James. *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Rereading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 90.
[21] Gadamer, *TM*, pp. 356–357.
[22] Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Second Edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
[23] Gadamer actually outlines three levels of hermeneutical experience. See *TM*, pp. 356–359; Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other*, p. 92–94.
[24] Gadamer, *TM*, p. 358.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., p. 361.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p. 357.
[30] Ibid., p. 283.
[31] Ibid., p. 383.
[32] Ibid., p. 385.
[33] Ibid., p. 379.
[34] Ricoeur, Paul. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. John B. Thompson (ed. and Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 143.
[35] Ibid., p. 131.
[36] Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 57.
[37] Ibid., p. 58.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p. 59.
[42] Ibid., p. 73.
[43] Ibid., p. 45.
[44] Ibid., p. 47.
[45] Majumdar, A.K. *Chaitanya: His Life and Doctrine: A Study in Vaiṣṇavism*, p. 300.
[46] Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 65.
[47] Ibid., p. 66.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Kinsley, David R. *The Divine Player: A Study of Kṛṣṇa Lila*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 1979, p. 157.
[50] Ibid., p. 63.
[51] Ibid., p. 302.

[52] Michael, Foucault. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Donald F. Bouchard (ed.). "Preface to Transgression." Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 34.
[53] Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 57.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Kinsley, *The Divine Player*, p. 157.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p. 161.
[58] De, Sushil K. *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961, p. 178.
[59] "Teaching Hinduism, Resistance to Change, and Mispreceiving the Religious 'Other,' " Judson B.Trapnell. <www.infinityfoundation.com/ mandala/s_es/s_es_trapn_teach_frameset.htm>
[60] Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 55.
[61] Ibid., p. 235.
[62] *The Sacred and the Profane: Contemporary Demands on Hermeneutics*. "Ethics, Hermeneutics and Politics." pp. 109–125. This articles offers some general comments about the role of narrativity and memory and their relation to hermeneutics which were very instructive.
[63] Moore, A.W. *Points of View*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, p. 223.
[64] Many of these comments reflect Ricoeur's work on narration and identity found in Narrative and Time and this chapter in Oneself as Another entitled "The Self and Narrative Identity," pp. 150–151.
[65] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Kathleen Blamey (Trans.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 161.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Gadamer, *TM*, p. 378.
[68] Thomas, A. Carlson. "Apophatic Analogy: On the Language of Mystical Unknowing and Being-Toward Death." *In Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry*, p. 197.
[69] Ibid., p. 198.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p. 304.
[73] Code, Lorraine (ed.). *Feminist Interpretations of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2003.
[74] Ibid. The above text include feminist essays that reappropriate Gadamer in a variety of positive and useful ways, in many ways it is a much more favorable feminist rereading of Gadamer.
[75] Ibid., "Hermeneutics and Constructed Identities" by Georgia Warnke, p. 71.
[76] Ibid., p. 73.
[77] Ibid., p. 74.
[78] Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 76.
[79] Kinsley, *The Divine Player*, p. 139.
[80] Daya, Kriṣṇa. "Comparative Philosophy: What It Is and What It Ought To Be." *In Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essay in Comparative Philosophy*, p. 71.
[81] Ibid., p. 72.

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Concluding Remarks

Arvind Sharma

When Rita and I decided to edit this volume we decided to divide the editorial commitments between us as follows: she would write the introduction and I would write the conclusion. As I settled down to my task however I realized that I had bitten more than I could chew—may be more than anyone can chew—by offering to write a conclusion to such a diverse though not unconnected set of essays. Lest the hermeneutical effort produce yet another book, I would like to lower the bar with the reader's permission and offer concluding remarks on the different papers instead of a grand conclusion. Rita has already indicated in the introduction how the papers cohere as a whole, so I shall use this opportunity to draw out further some of the threads which have gone into the weaving of this tapestry. I shall allude to each paper by the author's name, including my own notwithstanding the loss of modesty that might evolve.

Arvind Sharma

It would be invidious to comment on one's paper, at least at length, but it would also amount to dereliction of duty if nothing was said at all. And perhaps this duty is best performed by sharing some excerpts from a recent book which highlights the contemporary relevance of the concerns raised in the paper.

The paper alludes to the definition of a Sikh as adopted in the 1925 Sikh Gurudwaras Act, which lays down that, in the case of a doubt regarding someone's Sikh identity, the willingness or unwillingness to make the following declaration would constitute the litmus test in the matter: "I solemnly declare that I am a Sikh, that I believe in the Guru Grantha Sahib, that I believe in the ten Gurus, and have no other religion." The problematique of the last clause "and have no other religion" was alluded to in the paper but its full extent is laid bare by W. Owen Cole in his recent book entitled *Understanding Sikhism*, as follows:

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R.D. Sherma, A. Sharma (eds.), *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Toward a Fusion of Horizons*, © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2008

> Most intriguing and significant is the phrase, "and have no other religion." To understand this rare assertion of Sikh exclusiveness it is necessary to remember the historical and social circumstances. There was still a need to emphasise Sikh distinctiveness. "We are not Hindus" was a statement not universally appreciated. Many Hindus claimed that Sikhs were just turbaned Hindus, and do even to this day. The conservative, right-wing Hindutva movement seeks to win them to join in a common cause against such non-Indian religions as Islam and Christianity. Sikhs have not usually been affected by the requirement that they should have no other religion, at least as far as can be observed from glimpses of village life and even Diaspora gurdwaras. Hindu families are known to bring up one of their sons as a Sikh. For a Sikh to marry a Hindu of the same zat is far more preferable than for the partner to be a Sikh from another zat. Sikhs were quick to establish gurdwaras in towns where they settled throughout the world because congregational worship is essential to them in a way that it may not be to Hindus. Nevertheless, in those rare places where Hindus met for puja and there was no similar Sikh arrangement, Sikhs were to be found worshipping with Hindus. Hindus in similar circumstances often worshipped in gurdwaras.[1]

It is also worth noting that the definition of a Sikh, according to the Delhi Gurudwara Act of 1971, *further narrows* the definition of a Sikh. The definition reads as follows:

> Sikh means a person who professes the Sikh religion, believes and follows the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the ten Gurus only, and keeps unshorn hair. For the purposes of the Act if any one poses the question whether a living person is a Sikh or not, he shall be deemed respectively to be a Sikh according as he makes or refuses to make in the manner prescribed by the rules, the following declaration: "I solemnly affirm that I am a Keshdhari Sikh, that I believe in and follow the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib and the Ten Gurus only, and that I have no other religion."[2]

As W. Owen Cole notes:

> The significant additions are the inclusion of the word "only" after "Ten Gurus"; this can certainly be considered to be aimed at Namdhari Sikhs. The term "Keshdhari Sikh" is also restrictive. A Keshdhari Sikh is one who keeps the hair uncut and, in the case of men (and some women), wears a turban. He is at least distinctively Sikh although he has not taken amrit.[3]

The fact that Delhi lies outside Punjab may have something to do with the difference in the two definitions but the ideological implications of the new definition are far more significant (from the point of view of this book) than the geographical. These developments tend to confirm the position adopted in the paper that the legacy of a Western definition of religion, which was administratively introduced into the Indian religious reality during the British Raj, is still with us in modern India. The definition of a Sikh in the Delhi Gurudwara Act (1971) confirms this. The remarks by W. Owen Cole regarding the difficulty of squaring such an exclusive definition with Indian reality, cited earlier in this section, again confirm the point that attempts to retain the British practice may distort Indian religious reality instead of reflecting it.

Sharada Sugirtharaja

Sharada Sugirtharaja demonstrates how Max Mueller managed texts in the service of his own (pre-)conceptions of who the Aryans might have been. Her solid argumentation forces one to look beyond it and ask two further issues: (1) Max Mueller makes a definite effort to "infantilize" the Vedas—that is, to portray the Vedic person

as a child and a savage. The fact that this was done *consciously* leads one to ask: Is there some evidence that the same agenda was also unconsciously furthered by him, unconscious not in the sense that such a result flowed from drives within his unconscious but rather in the sense that it was the unintended consequence of some of his writings? (2) Max Mueller had a long intellectual run. Does his position then show signs of changing in any way with the passage of time? In other words, while it is essential to critique his position, his position should not be "essentialized" but rather, if possible, be placed in a historical (here biographical) context.

To take up the first question first—it seems possible to argue that the date Max Mueller assigned to the appearance of writing in India may have contributed to the impression that the Vedic age represents the "childhood" of the Aryans, even though Max Mueller himself refused to identify writing as the hallmark of civilization.[4] But many in his age did, and this probably confirmed his contemporaries in their belief in the prolonged, if noble, savagery of the Aryan in India.

Max Mueller claimed more than once that writing was unknown in India prior to the third century B.C.[5] His statement on this point in the *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (p. 262) is quite categorical: "I maintain that there is not a single word in Pāṇini's terminology which presupposes the existence of writing." As Pāṇini was placed c. 400 B.C. at his time this statement supports the previous one.

Most scholars think that the claim is excessively categorical. Raj Bali Pandey points out in regard to Max Mueller's comments that "the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini contains the following terms denoting the existence of the art of writing: (a) *lipi* and *libi* (script); (b) *lipika* (writer or scribe); (c) *yavanānī* (Greek script); (d) *grantha* (book); (e) *svarita* (mark in writing). Pāṇini further refers to the marking of the ears of cattle with the signs of the Figs. 5 and 8 and also with religious symbols like *svastika* and others."[6]

M. Winternitz observes in relation to Max Mueller's claim more generally as follows: "The oldest dateable Indian inscriptions which have been found until now are the... edicts of King Aśoka of the third century before Christ. However, it would be quite wrong, if one were to form the conclusion—as Max Müller has done—that the use of writing in India does not date back to an earlier age. Palaeographic facts prove undeniably that writing cannot have been a new invention as late as the time of Aśoka but must have had already a long history behind it."[7]

There are at least two other statements which Max Mueller may have made by way of suggestion but which acquired the status of settled facts despite his disavowals, which are significant from a postcolonial perspective. The first of these was his suggestion that the epithet applied to a people in the *ṚgVeda* (5.29.10), namely, the compound, *anās*, be analysed as *a* + *nās* as against the traditional *an* + *ās*. The first analysis yields the meaning "without a nose" and the second "without a mouth." Scholars of his time thus took the word *anās* to mean snub-nosed, and read in it the racial profile of the people whom the Aryans had to contend with. This interpretation was sensationally successful in projecting the conflict between the Aryans and the non-Aryans as racial in nature and has only recently been seriously challenged.

The other suggestion pertains to the date of the *ṚgVeda*, which Max Mueller placed in c. 1200 B.C., thereby fixing 1500 B.C. as the likely time of the advent of the Aryans in India. When challenged:

> Max Müller (1892), who hastily acknowledged that he had only considered his date for the Veda a terminus ad quem, completely submitted to his detractors: "I need hardly say that I agree with almost every word of my critics. I have repeatedly dwelt on the hypothetical character of the dates.... All I have claimed for them has been that they are minimum dates.... Like most Sanskrit scholars, I feel that 200 years... are scarcely sufficient to account for the growth of the poetry and religion ascribed to the Chandas period" (xiv–xv). A few years later, at the end of his long and productive life, he again acknowledged the complete arbitrariness of his previous calculations: "Whether the Vedic hymns were composed 1000, or 1500, or 2000, or 3000 years B.C., no power on earth will ever determine" (Müller 1891, 91). Elsewhere, Müller (1897, 87) was quite happy to consider a date of 3000 B.C.E. based on Sayce's discovery of two Babylonian ideographs—cloth + vegetable fiber (which Sayce believed was cotton)—that had to be pronounced "*sindhu*." This suggested that the Babylonians knew of the river Sindhu and, by extension, since he considered this word to be Sanskrit, the Indo-Aryan-speaking people, in 3000 B.C.E.[8]

The date of c. 1500 B.C. nevertheless entered the texts in Indology as a date "proved" by Max Mueller as the date for the *Ṛg Veda* and still continues to be the usually cited date in Western Indological circles, although under severe challenge.

The point then is that Max Mueller proved the source of not only conscious but *unconscious* textual management and further that in some ways the unconscious management—or rather the management of the material provided by Max Mueller by others—proved far more consequential. And this despite the reservations of Max Mueller himself.

One must now give the devil his due as it were, after all this demonization. Many scholars have made the plausible argument that Max Mueller's views continued to evolve in the course of his long life and his outlook, rather than remaining rigidly colonial, may have become genuinely global[9] with the passage of time.

Purushottama Bilimoria

Those who thought that the ancient Hindu *mīmāṁsā* tradition and the modern Western hermeneutical tradition will make strange bedfellows, will be surprised by their potentially fecund apposition in Purushottama Bilimoria's paper. The ancient Hindu tradition, like the modern Western tradition, also evolved its own hermeneutical canons so that the six rules of *mīmāṁsā* match the three propositions of modern hermeneutics Bilimoria identifies with Schleiermacher. And just as the propositions might vary from thinker to thinker in the Western hermeneutical tradition, one finds various listings of these six canons, which are similar but not identical. For instance, to the two lists provided by Bilimoria one could even add another—the *ṣaḍliṅgas*, which appear in the hermeneutics as developed in Vedānta but are freely acknowledged as drawn from *pūrvamīmāṁsā*. As K. Satchidananda Murty notes:

> The Pūrva Mīmāṁsā system has set forth the principles whereby the *purport* of scripture can be determined. These are known as the six-fold criteria or *ṣaḍliṅga*: (1) unity of the initial and concluding passages (*upakramopasaṃhāraikya*); (2) the recurrence of theme (*abhyāsa*); (3) the new conclusion sought to be brought out (*apūrva*); (4) the fruitfulness of such a conclusion (*phala*); (5) the commendation or criticism of it throughout (*arthavāda*);

> (6) the argument throughout (*upapatti*). The Advaita Vedānta also accepts these criteria as the *pramāṇas* for finding *purport*.[10]

Thus even though both the Western and the Hindu hermeneutical traditions seek the *purport* of the text, the way they go about doing so is sufficiently different for the method to influence the very concept of purport.

A similar asymptotic approximation seems to characterize not only hermeneutics but ontology, specially when one comes to Heidegger. For Heidegger speaks of *sattā* (Being) but Brahman is more than. As M. Hiriyanna explains in relation to the concept of *nirguṇa* Brahman:

> Here naturally arises the question whether such an entity is not a sheer abstraction. Śaṁkara recognizes the force of this objection. It is, indeed, the very objection he seems to have raised against a certain other monistic view (*sattādvaita*) of Upanishadic teaching which was in vogue in his time, viz. that Brahman is universal Being. Śaṁkara's monism differs from it in that it views the ultimate reality not as objective, but as identical *at bottom* with the individual self (*ātmādvaita*). This altered conception secures the maximum certainty to the reality of Brahman, for nothing can possibly carry greater certitude with it than one's belief in the existence of oneself. "A man," it has been said, "may doubt of many things, of anything *else*; but he can never doubt of his own being," for that very act of doubting would affirm its existence. It is thus eventually through something in ourselves that, according to Śaṁkara, we are able to judge of reality and unreality. Such a view does not mean that the self is known to us completely. Far from it. But, at the same time, it does not remain wholly unknown, being our own self—a fact which distinguishes the advaitic ultimate from not only the universal Being referred to above, but also (to mention a Western parallel) the thing-in-itself of Kant. We should also remember in this connection that what is meant by speaking of Brahman as featureless is that it transcends the distinction between substance and attribute, and not that it is a substance bereft of attributes.[11]

An assumption however which pervades not only the paper but the field itself: that the Vedas, as *śabda-pramāṇa*, are not only final but comprehensive in their authority needs to be interrogated. Comprehensiveness and finality could indeed be considered two sides of the same coin from a certain point of view. Such finality in the matter of *dharma* faced a challenge when the tradition encountered or incorporated practices which found no explicit mention in the *smṛtis*, the texts of which are then said to be based on *śruti*. This led to a distinction being drawn between *śruata* and *smārta karma*: "Vedic rites include *śrauta* and *smārta karma*. *Smārta karmas* are those rites which are ordained in the *śruti*. *Smārta karmas* are those which are learned from the *smṛtis* but *which are supposed to have been enjoined by śruti text lost to us*."[12]

The comprehensiveness of Vedas in the realm of *dharma* was thus fictively preserved in this way. Of greater interest perhaps is the recognition, occasionally found in the tradition, that the existing Vedas are *not* the repository of *all* spiritual knowledge. It should be noted that this limitation is not accompanied by the mitigating view that either the *original celestial* Veda was much larger, of which the present is a condensation, or that the available text is not the full text and portions of it have gone missing. Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi has drawn pointed attention to the *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* in this context:

> The thought treasure in the Mahābhārata is verily a vast Smṛti book of Vyāsa. Of all the Smṛti texts, the one expounded by Vyāsa in the Mahābhārata is the best. His critique of religion in this work is highly rational in his treatment of various topics. It uses analytical method in determining the validity of a religious statute. It gives various premises on religious precepts before arriving at the final conclusion. It says "some people say that the Śrutis constitute the infallible authority on religious matters; some say it is not so; our unbiased view is: 'all that can be said has not been said in the Śruti'" (Śāntiparvan 109/13). The Śāntiparvan decries the Vedic ritual of animal sacrifice; it upholds monotheism or the worship of one God and interchangeability of varṇa. It testifies to the prevalence of a lawful society without any distinction such as varṇa during the ancient past. It explains the rationale behind state formation and the underlying principles in the varṇa scheme. It extols the excellence of moral rectitude as being far above the customary religious observances based merely on faith. We are told repeatedly that every religion is based on moral principles (Śāntiparvan 259, Anuśāsanaparvan 162, 163). According to the Mahābhārata, all men are equally eligible for pursing the highest ideal for man. A sense of sacredness for and preservation of all life has been stated to be the main objective of religion. The authority of the Veda alone will not suffice in the determination of right conduct; the teachings of pure-hearted and pious men who are interested in the welfare of all beings ought to be considered as equally authoritative. These and several other liberal views make the Mahābhārata a repository of moral precepts.[13]

"All that can be said has *not* been said in the *śruti*": were one to take this statement seriously the concept of *śabda-pramāṇa* may have to be revisited in Hindu hermeneutics.

Klaus Klostermaier

The call to address the hermeneutic centre by Klaus Klostermaier is timely, specially as it comes at a time when the Hindu (as distinguished from the academic community) has taken umbrage at the widespread application of the psychoanalytic framework to the study of Hinduism. The protest can be given intellectual content in terms of Klaus Klostermaier's paper—that the use of the Hindu material in a Western psycho-analytical framework throws it into a hermeneutic circle when it might have been designed to help one move towards the hermeneutic centre. The following remarks of Klaus Klostermaier need to be recalled here:

> An analogue to this form of appropriation would be the formerly widespread practice of quarrying classical buildings of antiquity for the sake of gaining construction materials for homes and streets. The limestone covering of Pharaonic pyramids in Egypt as well as parts of the massive outer walls of the Colosseum in Rome were reduced to mortar to build dwellings for ordinary people. A home to live in can also be built without destroying an irreplaceable piece of ancient architecture. The fragments of the work of art "utilized" in an ordinary house can no longer communicate the message, which the monument expressed. Similarly quotes from Eastern sources, used only to support an already established position—frequently it happens to be a Freudian viewpoint—are not really saying what they were intended to say. They are appropriated into a continuing monologue and do not serve a real inter-cultural dialogue. They are embedded into a hermeneutic circle, which is self-corroborating and are not serving as pointers to the true hermeneutic centre from which they originate.[14]

It is worth noting that such a critique of the application of Freudian psycho-analysis differs from the one offered by psychologists like Alan Roland that Eastern psychologies as such may crucially differ from the Western, so as to render the application of categories of the latter to the former suspect.[15]

An incident which Klaus Klostermaier consigns to the obscurity of a footnote also needs to be highlighted here, as emblematic of another dimension of this issue. He writes:

> When I mentioned at a session of the AAR dealing with method and theory in the Study of Religions many years ago, that inter-religious dialogue is one such method, I was strongly rebuffed by the chair. This I found strange and later wrote an article on the topic.[16]

Klaus Klostermaier's case for a hermeneutic centre may also be strengthened with the help of an interesting metaphor: "...the circles of a spider webs are sticky, whereas its radii are not. This means...that if you wander from side to side in life you get stuck, but if you move towards its center you don't."[17]

Shrinivas Tilak

In his paper Srinivas Tilak address a crucial hermeneutical issue in the context of the *religions* of India, namely, whether they are to be interpreted *differentially* or *integrally*. That is to say, are they best interpreted by differentiating one religion from another, or in terms of their differences; or are they best interpreted by uniting one religion with another, or in terms of their similarities. If one chooses the first course, then the ensuring discourse would focus on how Hinduism is different from Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism and they from it and from each other. Then observations such as these would hold our attention, that Hinduism possesses a hereditary priesthood as well as a largely elective monkhood, while Buddhism and Jainism do not subscribe to a hereditary priesthood but possess elective monastic orders, while Sikhism does away with both priesthood and monasticism. And so on. If one took the second course then the discourse would focus on how Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism all accept the sanctity of OM (with the possible exception of Theravāda Buddhism) or share the overarching concepts of karma and *saṁsāra*. The word *śruti* provides an even more intriguing example as it can be understood both differentially and integrally in relation to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. From a differential perspective, one would point out that Hinduism is based on *śruti*, Buddhism and Jainism renounce and denounce *śruti* and in Sikhism the Granth Sahib is the *śruti*, in the additional sense of being set to music. From an integral perspective, however, the same concept of *śruti*, understood broadly, would provide the common template of all the four religions: Hinduism's basic scriptures are all called *śruti*; Buddhist texts when they begin with the expression: *evaṁ me śrutam* invoke the same template; Jain texts describe *śruti* as a mode of knowing, while the Vedas could have served as the prototype of the *Guru Granth Sāhib*.

Indology, as practiced in the West, has tended to emphasize the differences; while Indology as practiced in India, has tended to emphasize the similarities. Although

these tendencies are apparently contradictory, it could be argued that they are really complementary in the sense that a consideration of both the dimensions together (rather than onesided reliance on only one of them) alone would provide a balanced and nuanced picture.

The issue takes on an interesting complexion when viewed from a metaphysical and historical angle. From a differential perspective then, Hinduism would differ from Buddhism and Jainism in allowing for theism, and from Sikhism in terms of the kind of theism found within it and in Sikhism. In fact even Buddhism admits the veneration of Brahmā but considers it an error to treat Brahmā as a creator-god; but it is precisely God's role as creator which is celebrated in Sikhism. From a metaphysical perspective, however, it could also be argued that it is only by looking at Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism as a continuum that one can grasp the whole range of approaches to the phenomena of change encountered in ancient India. Thus some forms of Hinduism deny the reality of change altogether, whereas Buddhism asserts that change constitutes the ultimate reality about things, with Jainism assuming a middle position which accepts the reality of both permanence and change. Thus far from being mutually unintelligible they are really comprehensible only when brought together.

The situation is equally intriguing when one turns to ethics. One could of course *contrast* the different ways in which non-violence is understood in the various traditions as for instance, between some forms of Hinduism and Sikhism. Thus the Mīmāṁsā school of Hinduism, as represented by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, was inclined to maintain that the sacrificial killing of animals in ritual is not killing, or one might say, justified killing. Sikhism, specially after the establishment of the Khalsa, would also accept the idea that some forms of violence were justified—but here it was the killing involved in fighting for justice which was justified in contrast to the killing of animals being ritually justified. (The position of the *Gītā* incidentally offers an interesting point of interaction between these two positions. The Pāṇḍavas are fighting for justice and the war itself assumes the nature of a "sacrifice.") If however one adopted an integral rather than a differential perspective, then the shared moral thrust of all the four religions of Indian origin in insisting on morality as the condition precedent for spirituality would grab attention. This point was alluded to earlier in this essay. What lends it special piquancy here is the fact that the so-called *sādhāraṇa dharmas* are also sometimes referred to as *sanātana dharmas*.[18]

Aditya Adarkar

Aditya Adarkar's paper is an interesting example of creative hermeneutics, whose relevance is instantly recognized if it is pointed out that the various *bhāvas* of Hindu *bhakti* use the emotions of normal human associations as paradigms, such as the devotion of a servant to a master,[19] the love of a friend for a friend, or of a parent for a child and vice versa: "Still higher and more intimate is *vātsalya-bhāva*, the love of the parent to the child. Kusalyā had the lord himself as her child in the form of

Rāma. The love of Yaśodā to Kṛṣṇa was of the nature of *vātsalya*. *Śānta-bhāva* is the converse of *vātsalya*; it is the feeling of a child to its parent. Druva and Prahlāda are the classical examples here."[20] Aditya Adarkar seems to want to reverse the equation and ask: If patterns of human relations provide the prototype of various *bhāvas* of bhakti, then why can't the human examples themselves be considered forms of *bhakti*—like Karṇa's devotion to his parents being taken as a form of *śānta bhāva*.

This hermeneutically bold move is followed by a bolder one: That if some of the *bhāvas* are patterned on family relations then the fact that family relations go awry, or are not psychoanalytically what they seem to be, should be a relevant concern, hence the discussion of the Oedipal complex. This is a valuable suggestion although the tradition's response could well be that it is these relationships in their *ideal* versions that serve as models of devotion to one's chosen deity, somewhat in the spirit of the Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names. That the tradition is itself aware of how the real may depart from the ideal is illustrated by an example in which Karṇa himself figures, though not centrally, namely, the maltreatment of Draupadī.

In this way psychoanalysis may enrich the discussion of *bhakti* within the tradition rather than undercut it, a fear voiced so vigorously in the community recently.

One should however not forget that the complex psychologies of the *Mahābhārata* characters could as well be the grist to the mill of yoga as to psychoanalysis. At this point the distinction drawn in the tradition between *gāmbhīrya* and *dhairya* becomes relevant. These two words may be rendered into English here as *gravitas* and *imperturbability*. If one gets angry when provoked then one is simply an ordinary person, a *prākṛta jana*, not an *ārya* or a noble person. The noble person displays gravitas; even though the emotion of anger may have been provoked in him or her by the situation the emotion is restrained: "one keeps one's cool." Imperturbability however involves something more; it is superior to gravitas inasmuch as gravitas involves not expressing emotion after it has arisen, while in the case of the imperturbable person the provocation fails to produce any adverse affect. Both *gāmbhīrya* and *dhairya* are virtues but one is more of it than the other. The intelligent person restrains anger but it does not even arise in the case of the truly virtuous.

T.S. Rukmani

The problem addressed by Rukmani is a long-standing and interesting one, and illustrates how familiarity breeds invisibility. It is striking that some scholars would fault the early Upaniṣads for lacking in morality, without realizing that it is a pervasive *presumption* therein. Professor M. Hiriyanna was addressing this point already in 1949 when he wrote:

> But to be effective or even possible, the meditation requires not merely an intellectual conviction concerning the ultimate truth, but also detachment from selfish interests. This was the idea underlying the practice, referred to earlier, of keeping the Upanishadic teaching as a secret and imparting it only to true and tried pupils. "Give it to none that is not tranquil," says one Upanishad, for it was feared that an indiscriminate broadcasting of the truth that

> all is one might lead to its distortion and bring it into discredit. *The ethical training, which detachment signifies, is generally taken for granted in the Upanishads, and is consequently not dwelt upon much in them*. But where they refer to it, they definitely bring out its importance, as, for example, in the beginning of the Kaṭha Upanishad, where a youth who seeks to know from the god of Death whether the soul survives the body or not is tempted in several ways by the offer of wealth and power before the truth is made known to him. But it is not merely a spirit of self-abnegation that is presupposed by Upanishadic teaching; equal emphasis is laid in it on what is described as social morality. Thus in another Upanishad, Prajāpati, who is an ethical authority, as we know, enjoins the practice not only of self-denial but also of generosity and compassion. The Upanishads describe Brahman itself as without evil—a description whose implication is that he who desires to attain Brahma-hood should strive to free himself form all forms of evil. As Max Muller says, goodness and virtue are "a *sine qua non* for the attainment of the highest knowledge which brings the soul back to its source and to its home and restores it to its true nature."[21]

The point may be reinforced with the help of an insight from Professor B.K. Matilal, who writes:

> Unlike many modern Indian religious teachers, I do not say that different Indian religions simply talk about the same thing in different languages and idioms, just as all roads lead to Rome. Rather, I would say that they talk about different things *while standing on a common ground, the moral base*.[22]

That is to say, a basic plinth of decent moral living is taken for granted not just by the Hindu texts but by Buddhist as well as Jaina (and Sikh texts) as a necessary condition for spiritual attainment. Morality as a precondition for spirituality is the pervasive assumption of not just the Upaniṣads but of the Hindu tradition as a whole, and of the Buddhist and Jaina traditions as well. A university might open a centre for excellence and imply thereby that other universities are therefore lacking in excellence, when these other universities in their entirety may be characterized by excellence.

The use of reconstructive theology for building bridges in a comparative context should not be underestimated and one is grateful to Rukmani for highlighting this point. Even at a rather elementary level, for instance, contrasting views can be reconstructed to appear compatible in ways more than one. For instance, the doctrine of resurrection in Judaism, Christianity and Islam—or the Abrahamic religions—could be viewed as *anticipating* the the idea of rebirth, while the Abrahamic religions might wish to reverse the gaze and claim that the doctrine of rebirth anticipates—but does not fully develop—the idea of resurrection.

Rukmani's point can be broadened into a consideration of what are the *apparently unarticulated assumptions* underlying not just the Upaniṣads but the tradition itself. The Hindu tradition could well be characterized by certain pervasive *hermeneutical assumptions*, like the Upaniṣads. A few examples will help explain what I have in mind.

(1.) There are a whole set of practices such as *niyoga* etc. which are freely discussed in the text. But it would be naïve, from a Hindu point of view, to accept them on their face value as recommendations, on account of the concept of *kalivarjya*.[23]

(2.) Many Hindu texts denounce other sects, schools or the opposite gender. However, by the large the tradition does not feel scandalized by them. Is it because of an unconscious acceptance of the *mīmāṁsā* maxim cited by Śabara that *na hi nindā nindyam ninditum prayujyate. kiṁtarhi. ninditāditarat praśaṁsitum*.[24] According to this maxim the purpose of condemnation is not to condemn what is condemned but to praise the opposite.

(3.) Substitution is one way of resolving moral dilemmas in Hinduism, and perhaps a pervasive one. One example from the *Rāmāyaṇa* is provided by an incident involving Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Once, while going into consultation with a visitor, Rāma laid down the condition that anyone who disturbed him would be killed. As circumstances would have it, Durvāsā arrived in the meantime, a sage particularly prone to anger, demanding immediate counsel with Rāma. At this point:

> The irate sage threatened to cruse the whole royal family if Rāma did not come to receive him immediately. Lakṣmaṇa, as anybody with some sense would, under these conditions, chose to enter the consultation room. Rāma came out to receive the sage, who only wanted a good meal at the royal palace on the occasion of his one thousandth birthday! As the sage left, being satisfied with a sumptuous dinner, Rāma had to make the last important moral decision in his life. He would have to kill Lakṣmaṇa in order to fulfil his formal promise. There was a little cheating, at last, in the matter (reminiscent of Yudhiṣṭhira's cheating in his attempt to kill Droṇa). For Rāma said:
>
> *Tyāgo vadho vā vihitaḥ sādhūnāṃ hy ubhayaṃ samam* / 7.106.13cd.
>
> With regard to the good people, abandonment is the same thing as killing.[25]

The presence of such hermeneutical assumptions might well explain the difference between a Hindu and a non-Hindu's attitude to the same body of texts or data.

Stephen Phillips

Stephen Phillips has drawn pointed attention to the intellectual phenomenon of the varying approaches to the question of etymolizing itself. In order to recognize the point fully one must refer to the claim of modern Western philology that it provides scientific etymologies rather than fanciful ones. Scholars in the field are particularly enamoured of two main examples of false traditional etymologization: *asura* and *vidhavā*. Traditional etymology explains *asura* as those who are not gods (*sura*). But modern philology regards this as a back-formation from *asura*. The same is said to be the case with *vidhavā*.

Modern philology may be correct in pointing out these errors but with all its expertise it also seems to betray a certain lack of imagination in failing to recognize that the indigenous tradition reflects a very different approach to philology itself—that is to say, it fails to recognize that Hindu philology often operates not on the principle of *exegesis* (or reading out) like the Western but on the principle of *isegesis* (or reading in). Their respective approaches to the etymology of the word *aśvattha* demonstrates this point well. The Sanskrit word for the *pīpal* tree, *aśvattha*, occurs

in the fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Modern etymologists explain it as "the tree under which the horses stand," conjuring up the image of the victorious Aryans with their steeds tied to the trees. Thus Western philology would read the meaning out into history. Śaṅkara analyses it as *na śvo'pi sthātā*, or something which will not be present even tomorrow. The tree here stands for the fleeting *saṁsāra* in which nothing is immutable. He has read the metaphysical meaning into the word.

Phillips develops this point further as he elaborates the distinction between the historical and the hermeneutical approaches to the study of Hinduism itself. History deals with what actually happened, hermeneutics with all that could possibly happen. By applying this principle to both the texts of the tradition, and the tradition as a whole, one can develop Phillips' points even further. But let us first discuss Phillips' own exposition of this distinction between the historical and the hermeneutical. I should clarify that I am applying these terms to his analysis; they are not used by him in this way. Modern philology would try to determine the meaning of a text in terms of what the statement meant at the time when it was made. This is the characteristic feature of the historical method. The hermeneutical method would go along with this but it would also try to determine the meaning of the text on the basis of how it has been understood within the tradition and would also take into account the various ways in which it could be understood. The Upaniṣadic statement *tat tvam asi Śvetaketo* illustrates this point well. Apparently Patrick Olivelle, as cited by Stephen Phillips, thinks that the statement originally meant: "*And that's how you are, Śvetaketu*."[26] This is then an example of the historical approach.

Within the Hindu tradition, however, the text has been understood as "*that art thou, Śvetaketu*,"[27] although the exact nuance of this statement varies with the philosophical school involved. Even within the school of Advaita Vedānta itself it possesses two shades of meaning,[28] that it indicates either the identity of *ātman* and *Brahman* (in its *nirguṇa* interpretation) or that it indicates the "identity of the denotation of the two terms, *jīva* and the qualified Brahman while their connotations are different" [29] (in its interpretation at the *saguṇa* level). The school of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta understands the statement differently. "Here the word "that" finally denotes God having the entire universe as his body; and "thou," God having the individual soul as his body. The import of the proposition, as a whole, is accordingly the identity of the embodied in both, viz. God. . . " [30] In Dvaita Vedānta the same statement according to Madhva does not "imply identity of essence as in Advaita but mere resemblance."[31]

The hermeneutical approach is interested in all the past senses in which any text has been understood, not out of any antiquarian interest but as indicative of the *range of meanings* the text can acquire. It must therefore be surprised, but will not be taken by surprise, by any unanticipated meaning the text may acquire. The statement *tat tvām asi* again illustrates the point well. Within the Swadhyaya Movement of Pandurang Shastri Athavale (d. 2003) the statement is understood to mean that both you and I are one and thus as providing the metaphysical basis of social egalitarianism. The argument may be formally presented as follows:

> The Mahāvākya *Tattvamasi* has a twofold significance. In the first place, it points to the non-difference between the jīva and the Brahman, *Jīvobrahmaivanāparaḥ*: the jīva is Brahman only and not different from it. In the second, it implies that essentially there is no difference

> between one jīva and another jīva. It is the same electricity that glows in all electric bulbs. The intensity of the glow may differ in several physical bodies making them appear as different jīvas. Thus it is not only *jīva-brahma abheda*, but also *jīva-jīva abheda* that is the central doctrine of Advaita Vedānta. If every jīva is Brahman then every jīva is also every seemingly *other* jīva.[32]

The Swadhyaya Movement emphasizes such *jīva-jīva abheda*.[33]

This distinction between a historical-philological and a hermeneutical approach to a text is important, as pointed out by Philipps. It is a part of the politics of scholarship that those who adopt the historical-philological approach tend to bypass the hermeneutical and vice versa. But we are now led to a larger point—that certain religious traditions as a whole may be characterized either as historical or as hermeneutical in nature. Historical traditions would then be those which tend to favour fixed texts and meanings, and hermeneutical traditions would be those which tend to favour a plurality of texts and meanings. Christianity and Islam, for instance, would fall into the historical category by these criteria and Hinduism and Buddhism would fall into the hermeneutical category. Now we are ready for the final turn in the argument—that the historical-philological approach may be more appropriate for studying what have been described as the historical traditions and the hermeneutical approach for studying the hermeneutical traditions.

Jeff Long

Jeff Long carries hermeneutics to another level, to the level of the hermeneutics of the entire tradition, as distinguished from a text or an item within it. Thus the entire "Hindu" religious tradition could be interpreted as either *Hinduism or Hindutva*. In other words, it could be viewed as inherently plural and liberal or it could be viewed as an ideology which seeks to gain political power, while remaining plural in its self-understanding. This last point is important, as it is often ignored. Jeff Long correctly notes that V.D. Savarkar, the patron-saint of Hindutva, ends his slight if influential tract *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* with a quotation which would warm the cockles of a liberal heart, a quotation from Tukārām (1598–1649). He writes:

> A Hindu is most intensely so when he ceases to be a Hindu and with a Shankar claims the whole earth for Benares... or with a Tukaram exclaims... "My country! O brothers, the limits of the universe—there the frontiers of my country lie."

Hindutva does not deny Hindu pluralism; it only claims that Hindu culture *itself* is composite enough, without having to be counted as one religion among many which constitute the composite culture of India.

The real issue Jeff Long's paper raises in this context is the fact that its author considers himself an "American Hindu" and basically challenges the tradition to come to grips with this fact. Judaism has to face this issue as squarely as Hinduism and perhaps the answer will also follow the Jewish paradigm, that there are *two* forms of covenantal relationship with Yahweh, which R.J. Zwi Werblowsky explains as follows:

> There seems to be a religious dimension to the sociological fact that Jewry has polarized in two centres—Israel and America. The two centres represent the two classical forms of Jewish life—the Judaism of the Diaspora and the Judaism of the nation in its homeland. Both are historical configurations which Israel has known as forms of the covenant. But instead of succeeding each other they now exists side by side in dialectical tension or—if we prefer biolgocial metaphors—in symbiosis. Only prejudice or political dogmatism will exalt the one above the other.[34]

In accordance with this way of thinking the vast mansion of Hinduism would contain two portals of entry—one at the Eastern gate and one at the Western, one ethnic and the other universal. Hindu legal thought seems to have been groping in this direction perhaps without realizing it. The Hindu Marriage Act (1955) had to define the constituency to which it applies and its provisions in this regard could be cogently presented as indicating that a Hindu is one who belongs to any of the two categories (A) or (B). Category (A) would then consist of persons who are citizens of India but are not "Muslim, Christian, Parsee or Jew." Category (B) would consist of anyone who is not an Indian citizen but claims to be "a Hindu by religion." Little imagination is required to see that category (A) invokes an ethnic definition of religion, category (B) a universalist one and that both are combined to obtain a comprehensive conception of the Hindu.

The case of Islam presents an interesting parallel here. Although in many ways an Arab legacy, Islam does not conceive of itself in ethnic but rather in universal terms.

> In practical implementation, a Muslim is often someone born to a Muslim family and thus a member of the Muslim community. Or one can become a Muslim by repeating before two Muslim witnesses the *shahādah*, or profession of faith: "I bear witness that there is no god except God, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is the messenger of God." By so doing, such a man or woman becomes legally a Muslim with all the rights and responsibilities this new identity entails. Whether what this person publicly professes with the tongue is what he or she truly holds in the heart, Muslims assert, is only for God to judge. There is no other ceremony required for one to become a Muslim.[35]

Although this citation creates the impression that, as in the Hindu case, one might either be born a Muslim or become one, it should be borne in mind that a Muslim would cease to be considered one upon repudiating the *shahādah*. The Hindu, once to that manner born, however, can repudiate any specific content of Hinduism and continue to remain a Hindu until he or she repudiates the membership of the community itself by becoming a "Muslim, Christian, Parsee or Jew." The comparison discloses another interesting convolution. The convert to Islam would normally accept the *sharī'ah* as in some sense authoritative. But the convert to Hinduism could accept the *Bhagavadgītā* and reject the *Manusmṛti* without compromising his or her status. The point is significant because although Islam is a universal religion, its *sharī'ah* constitutes as detailed a regulation of life as the traditions of any ethnic religion, while Hinduism may be considered an ethnic religion but conversion to it is charactersied by the acceptance of pluralism and universalism, at least in its modern formulation.

One may now turn to the theological component of Jeff Long's paper. The effort to integrate Whiteheadian thought with Neo-Vedantic Hinduism is in keeping with other efforts, in India and outside, to introduce a dynamic element in the otherwise "static" Advaitic categories. Attention however may be drawn to a parallel between Whiteheadian thought and Hindu theism on the possibility of God being powerful but not omnipotent. This motif appears in traditional Hindu thought in the context of *avatāras* or incarnations of God, a concept accepted within Advaita—both traditional and modern. This is explicitly acknowledged in the case of Kṛṣṇa, for instance, in Śaṅkara's introduction to the *Bhagavadgītā*. Now Bimal Krishna Matilal notes:

> According to received doctrine, God is supposed to be omnipotent and he should also see that justice is done in the end. But Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* did not always claim to be omnipotent. Apart from certain inspired speeches (e.g. in the *Gītā*) he acknowledge his human limitations. He admitted before the hermit Utaṅka how powerless he was to stop the devastating war, and restore friendship between the two warring families. For as he said, the war was inevitable, and he had no power to stop the inevitable.
>
> Kṛṣṇa's own admission that he did not have may power to stop the battle or devastation either of the Kauravas or of the Yādavas (his own race) is an important evidence to show that the Hindu conception of God does not always include the attribute of omnipotence. I believe this constitutes an important difference between Judaeo-Christian theology and Hindu theology. Words such as *Īśvara* or *Bhagavān* are often used to denote what is called "God" in the Western tradition, but these words do have a number of meanings in the Indian tradition. God in Hindu theology is not always a creator God—that is, he is not a Creator *ex nihilo*. Nor is the Hindu God always a personal being. In the case of Kṛṣṇa or Rāma, he is of course conceived as a personal being, in fact a human being with all possible human virtues and vices. Of course, it has been claimed that Kṛṣṇa (or Rāma) was mightier than anybody else, had intelligence superior to that of anybody else, but this is hardly equivalent to the claim of omnipotence or even omniscience.[36]

Leena Taneja

Leena Taneja's paper provides the right note to conclude these remarks, as her paper raises an enormously significant issue—that of the ontological status of truth in a process of dialogue—an issue which is only going to gain in significance as global culture becomes increasingly plural. Our normal attitude towards truth is possessive: I "hold" it or you "hold" it, and we debate truth to test whose hold on it is tenuous and whose firm. But we are the locus of it, as it were. Despite the salutary Buddhist counsel that we should "hold" a truth and not "cling" to it, it nevertheless is still with *us*. But if we authentically believe in dialogue—either between individuals or between religions or even between two conceptual schemes—then does it not stand to reason that the truth may lie *between* us rather than with us? Does the recognition of *kevala* or *śuddha bhakti* as the fifth *puruṣārtha* in school of *acintya-bhedābheda* intuit this, or even the term *acintya-bhedābheda* itself?[37] And if "truth exceeds method" (pace Gadamer), then so does love. Dialogue can also be viewed in another light. Existentially it involves a mutual openness to be changed by the process of dialogue, a willingness to be mutually transformed. To use an illustration

made famous by Jung: the meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances—if there is any reaction *both* will be transformed. Traditions may not be persons but they have their personalities and it might not be unfair to ask how Western hermeneutics and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism emerge transformed by this encounter. Indeed the authors of the papers will probably be similarly affected by reading each others' papers and, the readers as well, by reading them. It might be wise to close this chapter with the prospect of starting such a chain reaction which might, in time, produce the intellectual equivalents of the processes of nuclear fission or fusion, with all the possibilities of transformations inherent in them.

Notes

[1] W. Owen Cole, *Understanding Sikhism* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2004) p. 148.
[2] Ibid., p. 149.
[3] Ibid.
[4] See F. Max Müller, "Reflections on Savage Man", in Walter H. Capps, eds., *Ways of Understanding Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972) pp. 70–77.
[5] Ibid., p. 74.
[6] Raj Bali Pandey, *Indian Paleography* (Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1957) Part I, p. 1. The relevant *sūtras* are 13.2.21; 4.1.49; 1.3.75; 1.3.84; 4.3.116; 1.3.11; and 6.3.115.
[7] M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1959) Vol. I, Part I, p. 27.
[8] Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 245.
[9] Walter H. Capps, *Ways of Understanding Religion*, p. 70.
[10] K. Satchidananda Murty, *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974) p. 81.
[11] M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949) pp. 162–163.
[12] T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism* (Bombay: Chetana Limited, 1971) p. 40 note 1, emphasis added.
[13] Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi, *Development of Indian Culture: Vedas to Gandhi* (Wai, Satara Dist.: Prajna Pathashala Mandal, 2001) pp. 224–225.
[14] Emphasis added.
[15] Alan Roland, "The Spiritual Self and Psychopathy: Theoretical Reflections and Clinical Observations", in Ashok Vohra, Arvind Sharma, Mrinal Miri, eds., *Dharma: The Categorical Imperative* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 2005) pp. 192–214.
[16] Please see original article.
[17] Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) p. 380.
[18] Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, NewYork: State University of New York Press, 1988) p. 344.
[19] "The relationship between the worshipper and his deity in the Bhakti tradition has been compared to that of the peasant and the feudal lord" (Romila Thapar, "Decolonising the Past", *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 2–8, 2005, p. 1446).
[20] T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism* (Bombay: Chetana Limited, 1971) p. 91.
[21] M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 27, emphasis added.
[22] Jonardon Ganeri, ed., *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal: Ethics and Epics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 174.

[23] P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974) Vol. II, Part II, pp. 796, 603, 929, etc.
[24] Ibid., Vol. II Part I, p. 581 note 1359.
[25] Jonardon Ganeri, ed., *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, p. 86.
[26] Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 253.
[27] S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978 [1953]) p. 462.
[28] This is clearly recognized in the medieval text *Kaivalya Navanīta*. See Tandavaraya Swami, *Kaivalya Navaneeta (The Cream of Emancipation)* (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1981 [1965]) p. 15.
[29] M. Hiriyanna, op cit., pp. 163–164.
[30] Ibid., p. 184.
[31] Ibid., p. 192. The statement is also interpreted in other ways within Dvaita Vedānta.
[32] P. Sankaranarayanan, *What is Advaita*? (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970) p. 90.
[33] See Raj Krishan Srivastava, ed., *Vital Connections—Self, Society, God: Perspectives on Swadhyaya* (New York: Weatherhill Inc. 1998) p. 195.
[34] R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Judaism, or the Religion of Israel", in R.C. Zaehner, ed., *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) pp. 49–50.
[35] Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "The Islamic Tradition", in Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., *World Religions: Western Traditions* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 354.
[36] Jonardon Ganeri, ed., *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, pp. 99–100.
[37] T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 166.